

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



## **INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

### **ST JOHN RIGBY VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Polehill Avenue, Bedford, MK41 9DQ

DfES School No: 820/3350

Head Teacher: Mrs M Clewlow  
Chair of Governors: Mr J McGivern

Reporting Inspector: Mr J Hamilton  
Associate Inspector: Mrs K Williams

**Date of Inspection: 2 October 2007**

Date Report Issued: 22 October 2007

Date of previous Inspection: May 2004

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and  
in partnership with Bedfordshire Local Authority

## **Description of the School**

St John Rigby Catholic School is a two form entry lower school with a final three form cohort in Year 4. The school is on the eastern side of Bedford and draws its pupils from the parishes of SS Philip and James, Holy Cross, Christ the King, St Frances Cabrini and The Sacred Heart of Jesus and St Cuthbert. The school community reflects the socio-economic range within the town. It is well supported by an established Italian community and an increasing number of Polish families. The school has robust structures in place to meet their needs and has recently received funding from the Learning Schools' Council for after school lessons for its Polish pupils and their families. Standards on entry are below national average with approximately 20% of the pupils receiving additional support in English. Overall, the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is broadly in line with the national average. 95% of the pupils are drawn from Catholic or Christian families with the balance being drawn from other faith traditions.

## **Key for Inspection grades:**

1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Unsatisfactory

## **Overall Effectiveness of this Catholic School**

**Grade 1**

St John Rigby school lives its Mission Statement: *God's will be done in work and play as we follow Jesus day by day*. The outstanding leadership provided by the Headteacher, senior staff and the lay chaplain ensures the delivery of a high quality Religious Education Curriculum and so secures the school's Catholic identity. Each member of the school community is welcomed as an individual with God given talents and is empowered to develop them. Through its *Care and Guidance Policy*, the school defines how pupils should be encouraged and nurtured. Strategies are in place to ensure that those who experience problems are quickly identified and supported through Circle Time and Rainbows. Prayer and the development of spirituality are at the heart of the school's philosophy with a dedicated prayer room being made available to the school community and to parents. Religious Education is meticulously planned, closely monitored and delivered in a spirit of joy. Children make commendable progress in R.E., feel secure and valued.

## **Improvements since last inspection**

**Grade 1**

The issue raised in the last inspection has been addressed. Timetable changes ensure that time is used more effectively. Standards overall have significantly improved. Robust assessment procedures are in place and plans to embed the new assessment levels into the curriculum are ongoing. Regular monitoring of the work in R.E. by the curriculum leader and shared evaluation resulting from Learning Walks, a particularly effective evaluative/monitoring process adopted by the whole school, ensures there is progression and continuity. As a result of this evaluative process, an innovative recording system for non-written work has been introduced. The format for Reports has been amended to show clearly the progress of each pupil and what each has learned. The school is currently piloting The Virtual Learning Environment project with another school in Bedford. This will make the work of the school accessible to the whole community.

## **Capacity of the school community to improve further**

**Grade 1**

The school's detailed assessment of its current position and planning for the future is of the highest order. The Headteacher and senior staff have a clear vision for the school, supported by all staff, governors and the parent body. Plans are in hand to introduce 'Prayer Journals' in Year 4 and to extend the emerging parental use of the prayer room for both private and guided meditation. The Chaplaincy Team provides a link between the parishes and the school and seeks to broaden the pupil's R.E. experience through involvement in parish activities. Collaborative working between four constituent schools of the Bedford Federation produced a second Federation Summer Fair, a powerful tool in uniting the diverse communities. Further opportunities for prayer and meditation have resulted from the construction of an outdoor prayer area. The provision of pre and after school activities for Polish children to develop their language skills is outstanding.

## **What the school should to do to improve further**

Further develop its excellent R.E. Assessment by the inclusion of specific targets within the marking regime to further extend a child's knowledge/understanding.

## **Leadership and Management**

**Grade 1**

The Headteacher, her Deputy and the R.E. Co-ordinator are outstanding leaders having a clear vision for the school as an educative Catholic community. All staff are aware of their responsibilities to ensure that all work is directed to implementing the school's Mission Statement and are committed to ensuring the fullest personal development of each child. Formal meetings begin with prayer and there is a clear commitment on the part of all to deliver high quality education rooted in spirituality. R.E. Resources are well managed and plans are in hand to further augment these. Effective structures, regularly evaluated, are in place to ensure the well being of each member of the community. Parents are integral to the school's success and are active participants through their attendance at liturgical celebrations, curriculum evenings, and P.T.A. events contributing greatly to the school's success.

## **The prayer life of the school**

**Grade 1**

Worship is pivotal to the community life of the school. Each day begins with class prayer or an Assembly with each Year Group preparing a termly assembly based on the current 'Here I Am topic'. Masses are carefully prepared to ensure that the pupils can participate as fully as possible. High quality displays in classrooms and communal areas reflect the centrality of prayer to the school. Each classroom has a Prayer Table draped with the appropriate Liturgical colour. Pupils respond positively to prayer time. An increasing use of ICT is being made to bring an element of awe and wonder into prayer and R.E. lessons. The school augments parish preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Reconciliation liturgies are held thrice yearly for pupils in Years 3 and 4. Plans are in hand to introduce Prayer Leaders from among Year 4 pupils with the intention that they will then lead small group prayer.

## **Chaplaincy**

**Grade 1**

The excellent Chaplaincy Team comprises eleven members led by the lay chaplain. The school's Chaplaincy Policy was reviewed and updated in September 2006. The chaplain is well known to the parents who find her very approachable. The work of Chaplaincy is strongly supported by the school's leadership. The Chaplain's role is clearly defined and her work appreciated by the whole community. She co-ordinates annual liturgical planning and has recently introduced the Prayer Leaders initiative with Year 4. Chaplaincy also supports the Rainbows programme [ 3 groups ] and is planning a new initiative to further extend pupil support. The introduction of a staff Retreat Day at Turvey Abbey was well supported with colleagues from other constituent schools in the Bedford Federation also participating. The next focus for Chaplaincy is to encourage the growth of a recently established Parent and Friends Prayer Group.

## **Achievement and Standards In Religious Education**

**Grade 1**

Work in Religious Education is of a high standard across the entire age range. Levels of attainment are in line with, and in some instances exceed, expectations. The R.E. programme provides excellent opportunities for each child to develop his/her God given talents. Written work is uniformly well presented with some being of a commendable standard reflecting the current curriculum, Mission Statement and Gospel values. Displays are appropriate and of a high standard. A variety of teaching strategies, including the effective use of ICT, are in place. Pupils enjoy their R.E. and readily contribute to lively class discussions. Their behaviour is very good and co-operative work is well established. A robust system of assessment is in place evidencing progression in knowledge and understanding. The SDP [ Year 3 ] is intended to increase teachers' knowledge and understanding of R.E. through planned INSET.

## **Teaching and Learning in Religious Education**

**Grade 1**

Teaching in all observed lessons was of a high standard. Pupils make very good progress and enjoy their lessons. Teachers' levels of expectation are high and they have a secure knowledge of the Faith and an enthusiasm for teaching it. Planning is highly detailed and is designed to meet the needs of all children. The R.E. co-ordinator successfully monitors the entire programme and provides clear guidance. Lessons are well differentiated with a range of learning styles. Resources are plentiful and are relevant. ICT was well used and enhanced the children's learning. Children requiring additional support are well catered for and participate fully with the well structured support of Learning Assistants. Parents are advised termly as to the R.E. programme with guidance as to how they might support it.

### **The Quality of the Religious Education Programme**

**Grade 1**

The school provides an outstanding Religious Education programme that meets the children's needs and conforms to Diocesan and Bishops' Conference requirements for 10% timetabled teaching time. Progression within and between year groups is carefully planned and well managed. The programme permeates all aspects of school life. The school has developed excellent links with parish communities and is an active participant in local celebrations. With its established Italian and more recent Polish communities, allied to its work on other world religions, the school is well able to deepen the children's awareness of the global community. Children are empowered to think spiritually and to meditate upon the consequences of their actions. The school's 'Code of Conduct' policy identifies self-reflection as an appropriate approach to reconciliation. Prompt sheets – What Would Jesus Do? - afford pupils the opportunity reflect upon their inappropriate actions.

### **Leadership and Management of Religious Education**

**Grade 1**

The Headteacher and R.E. Co-ordinator have a deep-rooted conviction in the educative task of the school community and this is the collective vision of all staff. Expectations are high across all areas of the Religious Education programme. Resource allocation is well managed. Each child is viewed as an individual member of God's creation with a roll to play in its furtherance. Monitoring structures support the delivery of a high quality curriculum. The Governors are kept fully informed of developments in R.E. and are supportive of the school though new structures, with finance and curriculum/standards committees being more fully developed than others at present. Planned INSET and the induction of staff ensure the continued delivery of high quality provision. Staff morale is high and there are well-established links with parents, the Diocese and local community. The result is an environment which empowers children to attain their potential.