



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## INSPECTION REPORT

### ST NICHOLAS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

Inspection dates 24th-25<sup>th</sup> May 2006  
Reporting Inspector Miss Sally H Johns

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic Primary
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mrs P Platt
School address	Jockey Road, Sutton Coldfield B73 5US
Telephone number	0121 355 2649
Fax number	0121 355 6303
E-mail address	mair.odonovan@st-nicholas.bham.sch.uk
Parish	St Nicholas
Date of previous inspection	15-16 June 2000
Headteacher	<b>Mrs M McConnell</b>

## Description of the school

St. Nicholas is a medium sized primary school that caters for 210 boys and girls aged between 4 and 11 years. It is situated adjacent to the parish church of the same name. The school, built in 1968, is heavily oversubscribed with applications from children who are baptised Catholics and live within the parish, which is a predominantly middle class area with good housing and high employment. Of the nine full-time teachers two are newly qualified and a third is in her second year of teaching. Three experienced part-time teachers provide support.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Unsatisfactory

## Overall effectiveness of the school

St. Nicholas is a very good Catholic primary school. It is living out its mission as a welcoming community, which prays, lives and learns together. There is a vibrant Catholic ethos which is discernable from the entrance foyer. Outstanding features are the quality of its Catholic life and the provision for spiritual and moral development. The school achieves its intention of making *excellent provision for the all round development of pupils as responsible caring members of their community and society in general*. Religious education (RE) is a key factor in the development of the pupils as fulfilled, responsible people; the teaching in RE is often outstanding. The pupils, when asked what they thought were the best things about their school, were unanimous in their praise and appreciation of their teachers.

**Grade: 1**

## Improvement since the last inspection

At the last inspection in June 2000 there were no key issues. Since then the school has markedly increased its resources for religious education, prayer and liturgy. The programmes for First Reconciliation and Holy Communion have been reviewed. Assessment and monitoring procedures have been updated and the school's family life programme has been reviewed with involvement of parents and governors. A peer mediation group has been trained and set up to be available at playtimes and a school council has been established.

**Grade: 1**

## Capacity to improve

The school has capacity to improve further; the senior management team feel that to stand still is in effect to regress. The school has three new members of staff this year including two who are newly qualified; they will continue to need the support and inspiration of the senior management team. There are plans to increase further the availability of Bibles suitable for the younger children in the subject development plan.

**Grade: 2**

### What the school should do to improve further

- Monitoring of pupils' RE books should be refined to ensure that marking is constructive and challenging in all years building upon the best practice in the school

## The Catholic Life of the School

### Leadership and Management

The leadership and the management of the Catholic Life of the school are outstanding. The headteacher and the RE co-ordinator have a clear vision of the school as a Catholic community in which liturgy, especially the Eucharist, and prayer have a central place. This vision is shared with the staff and governors. As stated in the prospectus *the formal teaching of our faith is reinforced and given meaning by religious practice according to the traditions of the Church*. The teachers and classroom assistants provide excellent role models. They support each other, show commitment and convey a sense of vocation. High standards are set for pupils. Parents are made welcome. Links with the parish community are very good; Catholics attending non Catholic schools are invited into school as part of the sacramental preparation programme and for celebrations following reception of the sacraments. Pupils are encouraged to feel part of the local and wider community by means of links with various charities. The inspector agrees with the school that evaluation is good, but a sharper focus on the criteria for the school's Catholic Life would help it to judge more accurately its own strengths and identify targets for future development.

**Grade: 1**

### Collective Worship

The school meets fully the statutory requirements for collective worship which is planned termly. Prayer is an essential part of daily life. The Mass celebrated in school for Ascension Day was prepared with great care and attention to detail. Pupils provided music as the classes came into the hall. Altar servers carried out their duties competently and reverently. The readers from Year 6 read with great clarity; Year 3 pupils had composed the bidding prayers and their delivery was from the heart. The singing was enthusiastic and the pupils showed a high level of concentration. Year 3 pupils made their First Holy Communion at four Masses in the parish so as to ensure that they and their families could understand the importance of celebrating the Eucharist in their lives.

**Grade: 1**

## Religious Education

### Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

On entry although most children have attended a nursery or play group there is no Catholic nursery for them. Their level of knowledge varies depending upon what they have been taught at home and learned in the children's liturgy on Sundays. The school is developing a scheme for baseline assessment. In Reception pupils quickly begin to learn about Jesus and prayer and make very good progress which is maintained through the key stage; standards are generally very good. In Year 2 pupils enjoyed talking about their work. They had made

invitation cards to a celebration of Pentecost; they knew that it was the birthday of the Church and that the liturgical colour was red but they were unsure of the nature of the celebration as Mass. Achievement in Key Stage 2 is often outstanding and, by the end of the Key Stage, standards are very high and there is evidence of extended writing. Pupils' behaviour is very good and they respond well to the tasks set.

**Grade: 1**

## **Quality of Provision for Religious Education**

### **Teaching and Learning**

Overall quality of provision for religious education is outstanding. The RE co-ordinator is committed to the subject in which she is very well qualified; she provides excellent support and guidance to teachers in lesson planning and assessment. Lessons are planned with care, ensuring that learning outcomes are identified clearly and shared with the pupils. Prayer forms part of each lesson and opportunities for reflection are incorporated. A particular feature of the lessons observed was the creative element introduced which enabled all pupils to be fully engaged at some point in the lesson. Teaching approaches are varied and included some good use of the electronic whiteboards for visual stimulation. Good use is made of learning support staff. Pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm as they are given opportunity for role play, small group discussions, research and reflection. Relevant vocabulary is identified and lessons are concluded in plenary. Assessment and marking in Year 6, where marking is constructive and challenging, are a strength. Elsewhere, comments give praise and encouragement but little help to pupils in improving their work. Discussion with a sample of pupils indicated that they had difficulty in identifying marking that helped them to assess the quality of their work or how they could improve it.

### **Curriculum**

The diocesan RE curriculum strategy, *Learning and Growing as the People of God*, is followed and covered effectively. As yet the school has not prepared its own scheme from the material. The school has also a good family life programme. There is a good programme of extra curricular activities. Overall the provision teaches pupils to live as a community, makes them aware that they are spiritual beings and encourages them discover that their spiritual nature finds fulfilment in religious belief. Provision for multicultural education across the curriculum is very good and it is identified for each year group.

**Grade: 1**

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

The leadership and management of religious education are outstanding. The headteacher and the co-ordinator have a clear vision of the central place of the subject in the school curriculum. They strive to set high standards of teaching and learning and encourage pupils' faith development. The subject is extremely well managed; there is a sound development plan for the period 2005-2008 and RE is effectively monitored and evaluated. The teachers are encouraged to develop a variety of approaches to meet the learning needs of all pupils and appropriate resources are being built up methodically. The subject leader is available to help with short term planning and has played a key role in the Year 3 sacramental preparation programmes to support the class teacher who is newly qualified. Very good links have been developed with the parish and with parents.

**Grade: 1**

## INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<b>Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 unsatisfactory.</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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**Overall Effectiveness**

<b>The overall effectiveness of the provision for the Catholic life of the school and religious education</b>	<b>1</b>
The effectiveness of any steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	<b>1</b>
The capacity to make necessary improvements	<b>2</b>
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	<b>2</b>

**The Catholic Life of the School**

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school</b>	<b>1</b>
How well the governing body fulfils its role in relation to the school's Catholic foundation	<b>1</b>
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality care and education	<b>1</b>
The quality of the leadership of the head teacher and senior staff in leading and developing the Catholic life of the school	<b>1</b>
How effectively leadership at all levels in the school promotes learners' spiritual and moral development	<b>1</b>
How effectively the school monitors and evaluates its Catholic life	<b>2</b>

**Collective Worship**

<b>The quality of Collective Worship</b>	<b>1</b>
The quality of the provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school	<b>1</b>
Pupils' response to the school's provision	<b>1</b>
How well collective worship contributes to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils	<b>1</b>

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION****Achievement and standards**

<b>How well pupils achieve</b>	<b>1</b>
The standards reached by pupils in RE	<b>1</b>
Pupils' progress in their work	<b>1</b>
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	<b>1</b>
How well pupils enjoy their work in RE	<b>1</b>
The contribution pupils make to the school community	<b>1</b>
Pupils' behaviour	<b>1</b>

**Quality of Provision**

<b>Quality of provision for religious education</b>	<b>1</b>
How well teaching promotes good learning in RE and meets the needs of all pupils	<b>1</b>
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	<b>1</b>
How well provision promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development	<b>1</b>

**Leadership and Management of RE**

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management of RE</b>	<b>1</b>
How well the subject leader supports and leads staff in raising achievement and promoting high quality RE	<b>1</b>
How well performance is monitored and evaluated leading to clear priorities for improvement	<b>1</b>
The adequacy and management of resources for RE	<b>1</b>
The extent to which governors discharge their responsibilities towards religious education	<b>1</b>