



DIOCESAN CANONICAL INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL, COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Voluntary Academy

The Drove, Sleaford, NG34 7AT

School URN:	139621
Inspection Date:	31 January 2017
Inspectors:	Dr Eilis Field

Overall Effectiveness	Previous Inspection:	Good	2
	This Inspection:	Good	2
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Collective Worship:		Good	2
Religious Education:		Good	2

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Voluntary Academy is a good Catholic school.

- Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Voluntary Academy is a joyful, vibrant community with a strong sense of its own Catholic identity. Under the clear direction of the headteacher, caring staff well supported by parents and parishioners, provide a loving environment, firmly rooted in Gospel values and the teachings of the Church.
- Through varied and thoughtfully planned Acts of Worship and a richness of prayerful activities, woven into the daily life of the school pupils develop a sense of self-worth and a genuine desire to live out the school's Mission Statement, *'Love, Live and Learn in Christ'*.
- The school is well supported by the parish. The parish priest and deacon are regular and welcome visitors to the school. Parents and parishioners regularly attend school assemblies and support the school in its activities. They are proud of the school and do all they can to promote it within the community.
- Religious Education is judged to be just on the cusp of good, however, pupil outcomes in Religious Education do not yet reflect the full capability of all pupils.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- Our Lady of Good Counsel is a smaller than average primary school situated on the edge of Sleaford. It has experienced a slight decline in numbers. Since the last inspection the number of pupils on roll has fallen from 154 to 133.
- It is part of the St Gilbert of Sempringham Catholic Academy Trust.
- The school serves the parish of 'Our Lady of Good Counsel', Sleaford which is approximately one mile from the school.
- At the age of eleven, pupils usually transfer to one of the three secondary schools in the town:
 - St George's Academy - specialising in ICT (co-educational).
 - Carre's Grammar School for Boys - specialising in sport.
 - Sleaford and Kesteven High School for Girls - specialising in performing arts.The nearest Catholic secondary school is St Peter and St Paul's in Lincoln.
- 42% of the pupils are baptised Catholics, 29% are from other Christian denominations and the remaining 20% have no religious affiliation.
- 14% of pupils have special education needs and/or a disability (SEND) at 'school support stage', none of whom have an education, health care plan (EHCP).
- 29% of pupils are eligible for the Pupil Premium.
- There have been significant staffing changes over the past year, including the appointment of a new headteacher in April 2016.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Catholic Life
 - Raise the profile of supporting the global as well as the local community, for example through pupil led debates, news display boards, fundraising etc.
- Collective Worship
 - Further develop pupils' skills in selecting their own readings, music and focal points for Acts of Worship.
- Religious Education
 - Ensure teachers have an accurate understanding of the '*Levels of Attainment in Religious Education*', use of 'driver words' and 'big questions' that is consistently applied to teaching and learning in Religious Education across the school.
 - At an age-appropriate level, develop pupils' understanding of '*Levels of Attainment in Religious Education*', and use of 'driver words' so that they become more adept at assessing their own work and identifying next steps for improving their work.
 - Foster a greater depth of pupils' understanding in Religious Education through improved questioning techniques, extending pupils' responses and facilitating pupil dialogue.
 - Review the format of Religious Education lessons to enable opportunities for pupils to write at least two substantial pieces of writing per topic, in addition to three or four high quality shorter pieces.
 - Develop the leadership skills of the subject leader for Religious Education in order for her take responsibility for the standard of teaching and learning in Religious Education.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL	1
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school. 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school. 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school. 	1

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school - outstanding

- The centrality of the school’s revised child-friendly Mission Statement ‘*Love, Live and Learn in the Light of Christ*’ is evident in the responses of even the very youngest pupils. A Reception Class pupil explained, ‘We Live, Love and Learn in Christ. It means we be kind and we always try very hard’.
- Pupils talk knowledgeably about Jesus as their role model and older children understand their duty of care towards the younger pupils. Their understanding of Jesus as a role model for living is a key factor in the exemplary behaviour of pupils both in and out of the classroom. ‘We try to be like Jesus. Older children are kind to younger children’.
- The pupil liturgical group ‘Shining Stars’, under the guidance of the subject leader for Religious Education, has fostered have a strong sense of mission both within school and in the wider local community. ‘Last Advent, we made Angels with words like Joy and Hope and gave them out in the town centre. The people really liked them and said it made them feel happy’.
- Parents view the school in a very positive light and value its strong Catholic ethos. They feel that the new headteacher leads by example and that all the staff are kind and caring. Parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or a disability feel that their children are valued and cared for.
- There are strong links with the parish community and these are greatly enhanced by the parish priest and the deacon who are regular and welcome visitors to the school.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school - outstanding

- Our Lady of Good Counsel is a joyful, vibrant community with a strong sense of and a genuine pride in its Catholic identity. The Mission Statement is lived out at every level.
- Staff lead by example, in their relations to one another, to pupils, to parents and in the welcome given to visitors to the school.
- The school's behaviour policy makes clear that it is founded on Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic Church; it is effective in promoting exemplary behaviour.
- Pupils have a strong sense of social justice and the role they can play in promoting it. 'I enjoy fundraising. We can help people who are not as well off as us'. Pupils perceive the liturgical group to be very inclusive, 'Anyone can be a Shining Light. We all help one another'.
- The school has recently adopted a 'Journey in Love', this is a scheme of work to assist in the delivery of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and is in the process of revising its RSE policy in accordance with current diocesan guidelines.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school – outstanding

- Building on its well established Catholic foundations, the new headteacher has been focused and energetic in seeking to secure the school's future prosperity through the introduction of the robust systems needed to enable the school to meet the high standards and accountability expected of a modern Catholic school.
- The subject leader for Religious Education is a reflective practitioner and has been instrumental in successfully ensuring that the Catholic Life of the school has remained a priority over a period of leadership and staff change.
- Since the last diocesan canonical inspection, governors have become more rigorous and focused in the monitoring of the Catholic Life of the school. They have appointed a linked governor for Catholic Life who makes focused visits which are reported back to the full governing body. Points for improvements are followed up in subsequent visits.
- Staff are fully committed to the Catholic Life of the school and are supportive of the new headteacher. There is a strong sense of belonging and a sense of anticipation as the school journeys into its next phase of development.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP	2
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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for the Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship - good

- Pupils speak positively and enthusiastically about the prayer and liturgical life of the school, how they enjoy it and how they feel it helps them. 'It makes me think how I am going to try and be more like Jesus'.
- The respect and exemplary behaviour of the pupils throughout the Act of Worship observed, without the need for any adult intervention, supported the staff and pupils' view that these attitudes and behaviours are the norm.
- Pupils speak enthusiastically about how they prepare class worship and how much they enjoy it. 'We take it in turns to prepare our class worship. I really like when it's my turn'.
- The 'Shining Stars' pupil liturgical group are proud of the increasingly prominent role they play in leading and developing the prayer life of the school. They are happy to give up their time to prepare liturgies and to promote the prayer life of the school.
- Singing is a strength of the liturgical life of the school; in whole school and class Acts of Worship, pupils join in the hymn singing joyfully.
- Pupils have enjoyed the increased role they have had to play in developing Collective Worship and would now welcome the opportunity to greater involvement, for example in choosing readings, focal points and music.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship - good

- Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school. They enrich the life of the school community and are clearly valued by all. Staff as well as pupils are very comfortable praying together.
- The school day is punctuated by prayer throughout the day, both formal and less formal spontaneous prayer was observed during the inspection.
- There is a balance of adult and pupil led Worship. Acts of Worship are planned around the liturgical year of the Church.
- Parents and parishioners attend school Acts of Worship on a regular basis and speak very positively about their experience.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship - good

- The subject leader for Religious Education has made developing Collective Worship a main priority and with good effect.
- The school accesses diocesan training for new staff, including that for Collective Worship, and also receive support from the subject leader for Religious Education.
- Since the last diocesan canonical inspection, the subject leader for Religious Education has sought to develop pupil involvement in planning and leading Acts of Worship and this has had a positive impact on the quality of the Acts of Worship and the engagement of pupils.
- The monitoring of Acts of Worship is now embedded and pupils are becoming more involved in this process.
- Governors regularly attend Acts of Worship attend now play an active role in monitoring their quality.
- The deacon is an asset to the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	2
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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education – requires improvement

- Pupil attainment in Religious Education is low in terms of the considerable ability of many of the pupils.
- Pupils are willing to answer and discuss the themes and issues in Religious Education lessons, but do not always have the opportunity to expand on their answers in order to clarify and deepen their understanding.
- Written work in Religious Education overall is below the expected standard for the ability of many of the pupils. This is due to them being given ‘closed’ tasks with little or no opportunity to write at greater depth and, in some classes an overreliance on worksheets.
- Pupils are uncertain about how to use the ‘driver words’ to assess and improve their own work in Religious Education.
- As a result of the raised expectations of the new headteacher and improved teaching, more pupils in the current Year 6 cohort (82%) are in line to achieve the expected level of attainment for the end of Key Stage 2 in Religious Education than the school has achieved historically.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education – good

- With the notable exception of the Reception Class, the questioning and response to pupils' answers tends to be 'closed'. Too often, single word answers are accepted with little or no opportunity for pupils to extend, clarify or deepen their understanding.
- 'Driver words' are not yet fully understood by teachers or pupils as a means for making accurate judgments about pupils' level of attainment in Religious Education or as an aid to identify next steps for improvement.
- In some classes, pupils spend too much of their time 'doing activities' that have no impact on their learning in Religious Education.
- The school has been and continues to be proactive in engaging the support of the Primary RE Adviser and there is good evidence that they are quickly acting upon that advice.
- In all classes pupils' oral responses demonstrated a good understanding of the link between their learning in Religious Education and their living out of the Mission Statement.
- Teachers are fully engaged and making a positive start to their journey in terms of developing their use of 'driver words' and 'big questions' to improve the quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- A sound knowledge of Bible stories was evident in all classes.

The extent to which leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education – good

- The headteacher and subject leader for Religious Education ensure that all classes meet the episcopal requirement to devote at least 10% of curriculum time to Religious Education.
- Training and staff development for Religious Education is given a high priority by the headteacher and subject leader for Religious Education. All staff new to the school attend the 'New to Catholic Schools' training led by the Diocese.
- The new headteacher has been proactive in seeking and acting upon the Primary RE Adviser and has made effective teaching of Religious Education a key priority.
- Historically, the subject leader for Religious Education oversaw the Catholic Life and Collective Worship aspects of her role, but not the teaching and learning of Religious Education. She is very positive about developing her role to include the teaching and learning of Religious Education.
- Governors are now more focused and systematic approach to monitoring, recording and reporting on standards in Religious Education.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There is a strong consensus that the new headteacher is providing clear direction and strong leadership.

SCHOOL DETAILS

School Name	Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Voluntary Academy
Unique Reference Number	139621
Local Authority	Lincolnshire

The inspection of this school was carried out on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham under Canon 806 of Canon Law in accordance with the *Evaluation Schedule* for diocesan canonical inspections in the Diocese of Nottingham. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. The process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule is in line with the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA).

During the inspection, the inspector observed 7 Religious Education lessons accompanied by the headteacher, a whole school Act of Collective Worship and class prayer at the start and end of lessons in three classes.

Meetings were held with the headteacher, the subject leader for Religious Education, three governors and the parish deacon. Discussions were also held with pupils and parents.

The inspector scrutinised a range of documents including reports of the governing body, action plans, the school development plan, monitoring forms, assessment data and tracking information and parental response forms. The inspector also examined the work in pupils' Religious Education books.

Chair of Governors:	Mr Jamie Shaw
Headteacher:	Mrs Michelle Parker
Date of Previous School Inspection:	12 December 2011
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WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN

Within the report, the following grades are used:

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

In the context of the whole school, the overall effectiveness grades have the following meaning:

Grade 1	Outstanding	The school is a highly effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are exceptionally well met.
Grade 2	Good	The school is an effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are met well.
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	The school is not yet a good Catholic school, it is not inadequate however, and there are aspects that require improvement. There will be a monitoring visit within the next 12 months and the school will be re-inspected within 3 years.
Grade 4	Inadequate	There are features in need of urgent and immediate attention. The school is not meeting the basic minimum requirement for adequacy as a Catholic school. The school will receive an annual monitoring visit and will be re-inspected within 3 years.