



INSPECTION REPORT

School: St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Address: Park Avenue, Bridgwater TA6 7EE

Telephone: 01278 422786

e-mail address: Sch. 059

URN: 123846

Headteacher: Mrs Margaret Jones

Chair of Governors: Mrs Helen Scott

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: July 2009
Date of previous inspection: 26/27 January 2006
Reporting Inspector: Anne Barrett

Description of School

The school serves the Catholic community in the Bridgwater area and the surrounding villages. However, the numbers of Catholic children attending the school continues to decrease, being currently less than a third of the population. Consequently, on entry to school, many children have no experience of church going or the practice of faith at home. Up to 15 children attend churches of other denominations. The majority of pupils are of White British or Irish heritage and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is about average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Overall, the school provides a satisfactory Catholic education. Leadership and management is competent, provides good role models and meets all statutory responsibilities. During the inspection period the governing body was in a state of transition and re-formation but there is recognition that the lines of communication between governors and headteacher need to be improved and there is a willingness to address this.

Grade 3

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has begun to make some progress since the last inspection in relation to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and the effective use of assessment. A yearly planner has now been compiled to give a clear focus to RE monitoring and teachers have begun to make use of the attainment targets for planning and assessment, although this still has to be fully embedded across the school. Procedures for informing and involving governors have improved but channels of communication between the headteacher and governors need to improve in order that the latter effectively fulfil their role in relation to the school's Catholic foundation.

Grade 3

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The senior leadership has an adequate understanding of the direction in which to move forward and how to do so. There is a clear commitment on the part of the headteacher and individual governors to improvement and development, but this must be further developed. The newly emerging governing body and headteacher must quickly establish a more effective, mutually supportive relationship, based on the shared vision which is clearly articulated in the mission statement.

What the school should do to improve further

- In order to effectively fulfil its role in relation to the school's Catholic foundation the governing body should as a matter of priority liaise with the diocese to arrange bespoke, school based training which reflects its context as a Catholic school serving a minority of Catholic children.
- Establish regular, diarised meetings to enable the headteacher and co-ordinator to review the progress of the RE development plan and to consider other aspects of the Catholic life of the school.
- Ensure that the RE co-ordinator has sufficient non-contact time in order to fulfil her development and monitoring role across the school.
- Link assessment more clearly to planning and use the results to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- Strengthen the capacity of the governors to monitor and evaluate RE, including the appointment of a replacement link governor.
- Make greater use of the views of parents and pupils in developing the religious life of the school
- Ensure that at least one inset day has a clear focus on developing the school's Catholic mission

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

Overall, leadership and management is competent and all statutory responsibilities are met. However, both headteacher and governors need quickly to establish a more effective, mutually supportive relationship, based on the shared vision which is clearly articulated in the mission statement.

Both headteacher and governors are committed to raising standards but need to work more effectively together in order to ensure that this is implemented in a planned and coherent way. The Anglican headteacher has an empathic understanding of the Catholic tradition and is effectively supported by the RE co-ordinator and members of the leadership team who are all Catholic.

Links with the parish and parents are sufficient but could be greatly enhanced by the headteacher and leadership team engaging in 'outreach' work at the end of school days. Parents speak highly of the school's Christian ethos and value the support and care given by teachers.

During the inspection period the governing body was in a state of transition and re-formation, providing individual, unfocused leadership and support. In order to effectively fulfil its role in relation to the school's Catholic foundation the governing body should as a matter of priority liaise with the diocese to arrange bespoke, school based training which reflects its context as a Catholic school serving a minority of Catholic children. This training should aim to clarify the roles of governors and headteacher, with a particular emphasis on developing and sustaining a clear common vision, as well as clarifying roles and responsibilities. This training should enable the governing body to be more effective in their understanding of the importance of the relationship between governing body and headteacher; monitoring leadership, RE and the

spiritual life of the school; the induction of new governors; governor links and visits; discharging their responsibilities relating to the well being of the headteacher.

This training should be supplemented by governors attending diocesan training sessions and the headteacher attending the annual diocesan conference and other key diocesan events. This two pronged approach will help ensure that both headteacher and governors are fully up to date with diocesan developments and initiatives and that governors offer adequate support and challenge to the school.

Grade 3

Collective Worship

Provision for collective worship is satisfactory and continues to improve. Since the last inspection there has been a steady improvement in providing opportunities for pupils to contribute to and engage in leading worship but this should remain a focus. There are now planned, termly, opportunities for each class to be involved in the preparation of an assembly based on agreed themes linked with the Church's year. These assemblies are effective in helping pupils become increasingly aware of Gospel values and to reflect on how these are relevant in daily life both in and out of school. Assemblies and worship are seen by staff as opportunities to engage and stimulate the pupils. Pupils are attentive during collective worship and respond with reverence.

Given that this is a school where the vast majority are not Catholic, a strong emphasis is rightly placed on providing each child with an experience of prayer which reaches them and challenges them where they are at in their life journey. All staff are to be commended for their ongoing efforts to be role models in faith for these young people. All worship is explicitly Catholic but inclusive and sensitive to the needs of all pupils who do not come from the Catholic tradition. Mass is celebrated once a term, usually on Holy Days, and other significant liturgical times are marked with celebrations appropriate to the age of the pupils. Appropriate strategies are now in place to motivate and involve pupils in the Mass, through planning, reading, serving, taking part in the offertory procession and regular hymn practice. Once a term the school takes a lead in the preparation and celebration of Sunday Mass at the local church and this is effective in encouraging those families who would not otherwise attend.

There is a clear sense, across the school, of the importance of prayer. Pupils enjoy praying and do so with enthusiasm and natural ease. They are encouraged by their teachers to collect their own favourite prayers as well as learning more formal prayers. In particular, the prayer area within each classroom provides a focal point for both personal and shared prayer. Pupils' prayer life is effectively nourished by carefully chosen music, religious artefacts and visual images which are very effective in helping to develop pupils' reflective ability.

Plans to set up a spare classroom as an indoor reflective area should be implemented as soon as possible, providing additional opportunities for collective worship. Links with the parish are satisfactory.

Grade 3

Community Cohesion

The school is developing community cohesion well but there is a need to develop more effective links with the local community and parents. It has, however, embarked upon reviewing its provision and is developing an action plan. The school is a welcoming community with a shared set of values and common sense of belonging. Pupils are proud to belong to the school.

The school is inclusive in its practices – both in terms of children with special needs and others not of the Catholic faith. Parents welcome the school's faith message and many attend school celebrations, but more needs to be done to involve them further. Opportunities are in place

through assemblies and class visits, for pupils to develop their understanding of the wider world by welcoming visitors from this country and abroad. For example, hearing about the work of local missionaries and experiencing a visit by a Kenyan children's choir touring to raise funds for AIDS orphans. Pupils are encouraged to raise money for CAFOD and other national charities which they are involved in choosing.

There are developing opportunities to explore other world faiths, culminating in an Y5 residential visit to Birmingham. This experience encourages pupils to develop empathy for other faith traditions through staying at a Quaker study centre, visiting a Sikh gurdwara, eating in an Indian restaurant and meeting with children from a Birmingham primary school, some of whom are Muslims.

Grade [3]

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Overall, pupils' achievement in religious education is satisfactory but progress is faster in Years 1 and 5 due to very effective teacher support and intervention. Especially good progress is made in the Reception class where the teacher's engaging and reflective approach ensures that all children are introduced to prayer and reflection through the year, in line with their own maturity level. In all years pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because of the good support they receive from teaching assistants. Although the use of attainment targets for planning and assessment is in place, this needs to be fully embedded across the school. At Key Stage 2 pupils should be given more opportunities to write in depth about religious issues.

Pupils enjoy RE lessons and older pupils particularly like the opportunities for discussion, sharing their ideas and times of reflection and prayer. Pupils listen well in class and are confident in expressing their ideas both in written and visual form.

Grade 3

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Overall, teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features. Lessons are well planned and organised. Teachers build on prior learning and are effective in sharing learning objectives so that pupils are clear about what they have to do. Relationships between teacher and pupils are good. Teacher questioning is effective and builds in thinking time to which enable pupils to respond at their own pace. As a result, pupils are confident in expressing their ideas and values and know that both adults and their peers will listen with respect. The good standard of whole school and classroom religious displays is very effective in supporting learning and is valued by pupils. Prayer features as a part of RE lessons and consists of a good mixture of formal prayer and reflective prayer which is related to the area of study. Assessment is adequate for teachers to monitor learners' progress but more focus needs to be placed on highlighting what pupils need to do in order to improve. Teachers use the new assessment framework but this now needs to be fully embedded.

Children are enthusiastic in assemblies and lessons, answering questions readily. They enjoy preparing their own classroom celebrations and prayers, and show reverence and concentration

when taking part in school para-liturgies and in-school and church masses.

In order to raise standards of teaching further, the well planned annual cycle of RE monitoring, training, work scrutiny and assessment should be implemented.

Grade 3

Quality of the Curriculum

The school uses the national programme 'Here I am' which fulfils the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools. Planning therefore follows the structure of 'Here I am' and is appropriately amended by teachers to meet the needs of pupils and maximise learning. The next stage should be to interpret the RE programme in a creative and imaginative way, making use of music, art and drama. The curriculum is beginning to enable pupils to make more effective progress in their understanding, knowledge and skills and the demands of religious commitment. Care is taken to build on the church experiences of children from other denominations and cultures is acknowledged and included in class discussions and assemblies. Pupils with additional needs are effectively cared for in the school's nurture group which has resulted in helping them to become happier, caring and well adjusted. There are well planned opportunities to understand different cultures through visitors from different backgrounds and, in Year 5, visits to different places of worship. A new sex and relationship education (SRE) scheme has been introduced which makes effective use of the expertise of the school nurse and is in line with the teaching of the church.

Grade 3

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The leadership and management of RE is good. The newly appointed, specialist, subject leader for RE has begun to make a significant impact in a short period of time and this bodes well for the future. She has a clear vision, a sense of purpose and high expectation in RE and is fully informed about all current thinking on the development and teaching of RE. Since her appointment she has been highly effective in supporting and working with the headteacher to develop an action plan which identifies the key priorities needed to promote RE. There are now regular staff meetings which focus on action plan priorities and a monitoring plan has been developed to enable systematic review and update priorities. Key information from diocesan training is now shared with staff and initiatives adopted, such as the revision of attainment targets and assessment, leading to use of individual record sheets and linked to planning. Staff work effectively together as a team and have adequate subject knowledge to teach to the appropriate level and are well supported by the RE subject leader and headteacher. However, those who have not done so would greatly benefit from attending the diocesan RE modular course in order to increase their confidence in the teaching of RE.

Given that the RE co-ordinator is not part of the leadership team, it is important that she and the headteacher (and where appropriate other senior staff) should have regular diarised meeting to review the progress of the RE development plan and to consider other aspects of the Catholic life of the school. The co-ordinator also needs sufficient non-contact time in order to fulfil her development and monitoring role across the school.

Grade 2