



INSPECTION REPORT

Holy Family Catholic Primary School

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D/E Number: 803/3435

Headteacher: Mrs Dawn Breeze

Chair of Governors: Fr Eugene Campbell

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: 11th and 13th July 2012
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Reporting Inspector: Mrs Maisie Foster

Description of School

Holy Family Catholic Primary School serves the parish of Holy Family in Patchway. It is an established community with many families living in the area for several generations. Links with the parish are strong. Of the 170 pupils on roll at the time of inspection 70% are baptised Catholics. The pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds with a growing number of families facing challenging circumstances. The school community reflects wide cultural diversity. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) is higher than is seen nationally and increasing, as is the number of children with special educational needs (SEN). Three pupils have statements of special educational needs. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals (FSM) has risen by 10% in five years, as has the number of families from British Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds. Traveller families form 20% of the school.

The school has a number of awards: Healthy School status, Eco School and Green Flag award, Sports School of the Year award and the Platinum Award for Outdoor Play and Learning.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

This is an outstanding Catholic school. The strong leadership of a visionary Headteacher, supported by a highly skilled Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and well-informed Governing Body, means that the driving ambition towards school improvement will continue to be a priority. Teaching is consistently good and, in some cases, outstanding so pupils make good progress.

Governors know the school well: its strengths and its weaknesses. Effective systems are in place to identify accurately issues for improvement and to ensure consistent evaluation. Central to the working of the school is its ethos of a Christ-centred place which values each individual of whatever background, beliefs or culture.

Exceptionally positive relationships at all levels lead to confident pupils who thrive in a stimulating and safe environment. Morale is high and staff work well together, supporting each other and united in a common purpose.

Parish links are good and becoming stronger. They are supported and nurtured by the school's vision of community and the total commitment of the parish priest who is also the Chair of Governors. Parents are wholeheartedly supportive of the school and feel that their children are well-served in all aspects of their education, especially in their faith. As one parent stated: *"I see Catholic values in practice every day in school and how these are nurtured in the children."*

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school has made outstanding improvement since the last inspection. Rigorous self-evaluation by leaders and managers leads to areas identified for development being addressed effectively and swiftly. The high expectations of the leadership, supported by accurate analysis of data and systematic reviews, combine to inform highly effective decision-making. The inspirational leadership of the Headteacher, who also ably leads Religious Education, sustained by a talented Senior Leadership Team and supported by dedicated and hard-working staff, means that the school is in an excellent position to develop and improve further.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

As the school has accurately identified in its School Development Plan (SDP) it should:

- continue to spread the good practice in marking consistently across the school
- continue to work towards raising the quality of teaching to outstanding across the school
- continue to develop closer links with the parish.

How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?

Pupils are clear in their understanding of the ethos of the school and its mission. They know that they are part of a Christian community, with Christ at its centre and that this impacts on their lives and behaviour. Most can express this and for those who are less articulate, an emphasis on developing communication skills of all kinds, helps to ensure that by Year 6 pupils are fluent in expressing their faith. This is evident in the exceptional respect they show each other, the mutual support they give and their enthusiastic acknowledgement that they are a school family. Pupils benefit from the excellent role models of the adults around them, learning from them what it is to be a follower of Christ. They are shown unstinting and consistent care and respect by the adults in their daily interactions, exemplifying the values of Christian life. Pupils have a high regard for and genuine affection for the staff. As a Year 5 pupil explained: *"Teachers are kind. They don't shout... They help us. Mrs Breeze never gets angry even when we've done something wrong. She listens to us."*

Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own behaviour and its effects on those around them. They develop a moral view of the world.

Parents value the care accorded to their children and rightly regard it as a strength of the school, so evident in the excellent relationships within the school community. As one parent wrote: *"The school is well-named. It is a big family, a warm community where everyone looks out for each other. There is a phenomenal love of the staff for the children and for keeping them safe and nurtured."*

Pupils contribute to the Catholic life of the school by taking responsibility for each other in a variety of ways. For example, Year 6 pupils helpfully monitor younger pupils during play-times. Some older pupils are trained by the local secondary school, pupils and staff, to become young leaders. They then run clubs and activities themselves. They build positive relationships, show the younger ones a model of caring behaviour and develop their own leadership skills. As they progress through the school, pupils develop the skills and abilities to lead prayer and Collective Worship at class and whole school levels. By leading and composing prayers, including Bidding Prayers for Mass, the older pupils provide role models for younger pupils to aspire to and move forward on their own faith journeys. From their first entry into school pupils learn to pray, mostly through singing and signing, appropriate to their age and ability. Prayer is an integral and significant part of school life. Indeed, it is so much a part of daily activity that on one occasion a Reception pupil reminded a visiting teacher that they had not prayed as they usually did and needed to do so! Pupils' active participation is encouraged and supported. They respond enthusiastically to the many opportunities they are given to pray, in silent reflection, alone or collaboratively. Responsibility for leading Collective Worship and liturgies furthers pupils' personal, moral and spiritual development as they pray together, make decisions, study Scripture and discuss its relevance to their own lives.

In one Collective Worship led by the pupils each year group shared their reflections on their achievements during the year. They were thus reminded of their value, their talents and the progress they had made. It was an opportunity to boost self-esteem and to thank God for all His gifts. Each class brought symbols of their school experiences including paper friends, a skipping rope, a Topic book, a cross and a Bible stating: *"This reminds us that at the heart of all we do here at school is Christ"*, thus reinforcing the words of the school's Mission statement.

Parents and parishioners are involved in the prayer life of the school. They attend reflections, class liturgies and the celebration of Mass, providing witness as part of the whole worshipping community.

Pupils join the school with lower than nationally expected levels of knowledge and understanding. The range of ability is extremely wide and accurate assessment of pupils' attainment and their needs leads to effective intervention to support learning. Regular and consistent monitoring ensures sustained progress. A Well-being Group provides additional support to pupils and families who are identified as most likely to benefit from it. Some pupils make outstanding progress and most pupils make at least good progress, including those identified as vulnerable and those who have English as an additional language (EAL) and pupils identified as having special educational needs (SEN). This is the result of consistently good teaching, the early identification of pupils' needs and targeted support from skilled support staff. This academic year, Year 6 pupils have achieved higher levels than those expected nationally in the core subjects.

An in-depth review of the RE programme *The Way, the Truth and the Life* revealed a greater engagement in pupil learning than previously. The creative approaches it offers, using art, music, drama and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) help to engage the pupils' interest and fire their enthusiasm. This leads to positive

attitudes and sustained learning because they are intellectually and emotionally involved and moved to deeper thinking. Acting out a story from the gospel not only reinforces knowledge, it also develops empathy and thinking beyond the literal. After acting the story of Blind Bartimaeus, in which they all participated with huge enthusiasm, pupils were asked why Jesus performed miracles on sick people. A Year 1 pupil offered: *"Because he wants to show God's love for everyone."* Another ventured: *"Because Jesus has a special love for sick people."*

Both pupils used the present tense because they are aware of the presence of God's love, not only in historical times but also in their own lives. A year 4 pupil confided that he was not baptised but he considered that he is still part of God's family and when he prays he believes that God listens to him.

Grade 1

How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic Life of the school?

Leaders and managers know the school well and have a deep commitment to its ethos. They follow their Mission Statement to foster a community with Christ at its centre. As one Year 6 pupil confirmed: *"God is in everything we do, not just in RE."*

This vision permeates all policies and practices, so that the question: *"What impact will it have on the Catholic life of the school?"* is an important criterion for leaders when planning initiatives. The school leadership has rigorous systems for effective self-evaluation and detailed documentation to support these procedures; some of which have been instigated by the parish priest who is also Chair of Governors and the link governor for RE.

Governors understand their roles and responsibilities and their need to challenge the school as well as support its improvement. They play an active part in monitoring the Catholic life through regular visits, observing lessons, talking to staff and pupils and doing learning walks so that they are well-informed. They are a visible presence at liturgies, reflections and the celebration of Mass, witnesses to their shared faith. The good systems of communication and evaluation between the school and managers contribute effectively to the Catholic mission of the school.

Foundation Governors know and implement their responsibilities as representatives of the Bishop. Leaders and managers attend appropriate meetings and courses run by the Diocese and Local Authority (LA). This ensures they are up to date with legislation and that statutory and canonical responsibilities are met. At least one Inset day is focused on the Catholic dimension. All training is evaluated for its impact on the Catholic life of the school.

A far-sighted parish priest, as the Chair of Governors and link governor for RE, gives active help and encouragement to developing the Catholic dimension of the school. As a frequent visitor to classes he has a close knowledge of the school's provision so is well-placed to support and monitor the Catholic life. He effectively supports both staff and pupils in their planning and celebration of liturgies through informal discussions and

advice to staff through clear formal written guidance. In his role as Chair of Governors he is closely involved in the School Evaluation Form (SEF) and School Development Plan (SDP) to ensure that RE is at the centre of school improvement. He frequently meets teachers and the Headteacher, formally and informally, so is well-informed and able to challenge and to contribute to strategies for improvement. As Chair of Governors he makes himself available to parents in school and in the parish, and supports pupils by attending their activities in school and at local events and competitions. Governors are closely involved in the school community through joining its liturgies, social events and through formal and informal visits. They know their school well and work diligently and effectively for the benefit of its pupils.

A significant strength of the school is its welcoming ethos, valuing each individual as a member of the family of God. Children know that they are loved and cared for regardless of their background or ability. As one Year 6 pupil explained: *"We are all unique, different and special."*

To emphasise the inclusive nature of the school and protect its distinctiveness, the Governors have produced an impressive statement on community cohesion, available to all and adhered to by the school team. Trusting relationships are fostered in a community which has some vulnerable and challenged families within it. Excellent pastoral care ensures that the pupils of Traveller families are well supported and integrated with their peers. Governors respond well to the challenge of some prejudice by ensuring that the Mission Statement is followed through in appropriate action. As stated by the Chair of Governors: *"We aim to provide our children with a Mission Statement which is lived, not just read."*

There is no discrimination in school – instead there is integration and co-operation, evident at every level in the excellent relationships and the climate of trust which engenders confidence and growth. Diverse backgrounds are positively encouraged and other world faiths taught and celebrated. One Hindu pupil brought artefacts to show and explain to his classmates. He enriched their world view and gained status himself. International and global links, including schools and communities, deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world's diversity, its wonders and its challenges.

Multi-faith Week expands pupils' knowledge and understanding of how different people in our world live. As each class researches a world faith, individuals gain in knowledge and understanding of what it is to live by a set of beliefs and values, just as they are learning to do. The range of forms in which the knowledge is presented to the whole school itself mirrors the diverse cultures and faiths: written research read aloud, ICT presentations, dance and art. Older and younger pupils pair up to present their findings and thereby reinforce the meaning of community.

The composition of the Governing Body reflects the diversity of the community it represents. A governor represents the Traveller community as it is such a significant part of the school's pupil population. Images of famous people from ethnic minority groups are prominent in the stimulating displays throughout the school, from Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Nelson Mandela to Roma artists, providing positive role models of a global and cross-cultural kind.

The school works hard to establish a climate of trust with parents and carers and this close liaison includes the valuable services of a Parent Liaison Co-ordinator who acts on behalf of all vulnerable families. It also has excellent relationships with other local schools, including its sister school, St Mary's, and with external agencies. This ensures maximum support where needed while promoting good community links.

Parents are involved in a range of voluntary roles which builds community and gives pupils an example of service. They provide support in and out of class, helping with educational visits and listening to readers in school. They attend Masses and Collective Worship, engage in Reflections, especially at Advent and Lent, and accompany the pupils on visits to the parish church as well as to Mass.

The extensive range of extra-curricular activities ensures that all pupils are offered good opportunities across all areas, from sport to music, science, art and the Playbus. Trips to local industry provide a glimpse of the wider world of work and links with skills pupils learn at school. Further opportunities, such as the Heritage Project, involve working alongside other schools and residents, artists and artisans to research the local environment historically and geographically. Such activities build a sense of shared identity and community.

Pupils are aware of the needs of other people in an unequal world and raise funds with great enthusiasm for those in need locally, nationally and globally. They learn empathy for the different needs and circumstances of others and how to fulfil the second commandment in practical ways.

Grade 1

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Prayer is central to the life of the school. Staff and pupils pray together and all Governors' meetings begin with a prayer. Time for reflection is built into the timetable and forms part of each RE lesson, so pupils learn what it is to be still and silent and think.

The traditional prayers of the Church are taught and explained, including the responses to the Mass so that pupils' involvement and understanding are deepened and their spirituality grows. The signing of prayers and hymns shows the inclusiveness of prayer provision and helps pupils for whom the written word alone is a challenge. The school is blessed as the parish priest is an interpreter for the deaf and hard of hearing and views signing as an important part of communication, especially for the kinaesthetic learner.

The parish priest has a great enthusiasm for liturgical celebration in school and the parish church which pupils attend together. Pupil conferencing shows that children now see the celebration of the sacraments, and particularly of the Eucharist, as the same wherever celebrated. The link governor for RE and Senior Leadership Team review with rigour the provision for prayer and support pupils in leading prayer themselves, appropriate to their age and ability.

The policy for Collective Worship makes clear the purpose and prominence of Collective Worship in the school, thus supporting teachers in their own practice and in their guidance of pupils. Collective Worship is planned for the whole year and is rooted in the Gospels, the RE programme and the liturgical year. It is recorded in a variety of forms, including photographic, so that it may be monitored and evaluated more effectively. Assessing pupils' progress in acquiring skills and abilities to organise and lead Collective Worship is a significant part of meeting their spiritual needs and responding to them. Progression in their prayer life and liturgies is planned by teachers who support each other and receive support from the Headteacher as RE Co-ordinator. This ensures a consistent approach and keeps the prayer life of the school linked to the liturgical life of the Church. It is evaluated by the Staffing and Curriculum Committee and any development issues are addressed.

Reflective Acts of Collective Worship engage pupils at a deep level, involving them actively in developing their relationships with God and with each other. In one Collective Worship the whole school assembled in an attitude of prayerfulness, beginning with the youngest members who modelled exemplary behaviour as they entered the school hall in utter silence. With their hands together, all the pupils seemed to be aware of their sacred purpose in what had become a sacred place of prayer and community united in common purpose. What made it even more astounding to the onlooker was the incongruity of Year 2 pupils being dressed as clowns, complete with red noses and strange wigs!

Sacramental preparation takes place in the parish and is supported by the school. The learning objective of the lesson taught by the catechists is re-visited by the school so as to reinforce the learning. The preparation is a joint undertaking with St. Mary's, also serving the parish. This unity of purpose is confirmed by the help of catechists from both schools and the parish, all working as a community.

The provision of Bibles in Key stage 2 has enabled pupils to become more focussed on the study of Scripture. They help each other find references, research independently and enjoy opportunities to further their own learning.

The development of the Forest School area, with its trees and meadow and wooden constructions for creative play, is an excellent example of the imaginative thinking of the school's leadership. It is rightly seen as an opportunity for pupils to expand their spirituality in a green landscape; to be taken to a close understanding of the wonders of God's creation and to feel safe and free to move about at will. The opening of the venture encapsulated its spiritual as well as physical nature: the area was blessed with holy water – water which gives life.

The programme for RE is based on the RE Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools and therefore meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. It has a strong focus on Catholicity and Catholic doctrine and is scripturally based. This ensures that pupils become familiar with the Bible and the stories it has to teach us about our way as the People of God. As it is cyclical in approach, pupils re-visit concepts, strengthening their knowledge and understanding at ever deeper levels. The high levels of expectation and challenge and its spirituality extend pupils levels of thinking as they respond to its

challenges. Older pupils learn more complex concepts such as justice, equality and stewardship. They not only learn about and from the saints of the past but also from role models of our own time, for example, Archbishop Oscar Romero, Martin Luther King and Mother Teresa. They are invited to question themselves and ponder what responses they might have made in the same circumstances with the same challenges.

ICT is used effectively to engage pupils' interest and enhance motivation to learn. Independent research on various topics, such as the work of different charities, provides opportunities for all pupils to learn as individual pupils share their findings with their peers.

Teaching and learning are good and, in some cases, outstanding. Lessons are well-planned, prepared and managed. Where practice is best the school's focus on raising the quality of teaching from good to outstanding is evident. Probing questions extend pupils' thinking and ensure a greater degree of challenge. Questioning also acts as a tool for teachers to assess what pupils know, understand and can do. This information is then used to plan the next step in learning. This practice is becoming more consistent and is identified in the School Development Plan. Expectations and challenge are high. Pace is brisk and the enthusiasm of both teachers and pupils builds positive learning experiences. Imaginative approaches, especially the thoughtful use of images, music and drama, engage pupils' interest and also provide opportunities for powerful reflection, furthering spiritual development. In striving for greater pupil independence, sometimes the balance between allowing breadth of choice in pupils' tasks means that there is not sufficient teacher direction. Training is targeted to ensure that teachers have increasingly good subject knowledge. Support for vulnerable pupils is sensitively given and the effective employment of skilled and caring Teaching Assistants adds significantly to the school's provision. The excellent behaviour of pupils ensures that no teaching time is lost managing negative behaviour.

The rigorous procedures of monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning ensure that good practice is shared, celebrated and built on. Issues for improvement are targeted and addressed through effective systems, including Performance Management. Peer-assessment is in its early stages but is being developed. In one lesson pupils assessed their own and others' learning, discussing the factors which are barriers to learning and those which facilitate it. The Early Years Foundation Stage profile involves close liaison with parents who are invited into class once a month to look at their child's learning diary and discuss any issues with the teachers. Through these very detailed assessments parents are well-informed about their child's first year in school. Good systems for tracking all pupils' progress through both Key Stages are embedded and levelling is regularly undertaken by teachers and the RE Co-ordinator. Moderation does not yet involve all teachers though it is being developed to ensure consistency. Systems of self-evaluation are regularly reviewed to make continuing refinements so that targets set reflect the need of the individual and the priorities for school development.

Grade 1