



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **Holy Family Catholic Primary School**

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DfE Number: 8663001

URN: 138636

Headteacher: Miss Karen Bathe

Chair of Governors: Father Gary Brassington

RE Lead: Mrs Louise Brown

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**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**

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Date of inspection: 20-21<sup>st</sup> September 2017

Date of previous inspection: 6-7<sup>th</sup> December 2011

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington

Additional Inspector: Mrs Anne Barrett

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## Description of the school

Holy Family is an above average-sized primary school with a current roll of 315 pupils, of whom 80% are Catholic. It serves the parish of Holy Family, Swindon and draws pupils from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. The wide cultural diversity of the pupils is reflected in the significantly higher than average numbers who have English as an Additional Language (EAL). The proportions of pupils with special educational needs, and those who are disadvantaged, are also above the national average. Pupils join the school with a low baseline level of prior knowledge and experience of religious practice. The links with parish and parents are strong, and pupils' attendance is above the national average.

## Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

**Grade 1**

This is an outstanding school because:

- The governing body and all leaders are totally committed to the promotion and nurturing of the school's Catholic life and mission, and under the inspirational head teacher, continue to sustain the school's outstanding, vibrant Catholic ethos.
- It is a fully inclusive school where pupils, their parents and carers, from all faiths and none are made welcome, and all show respect and genuine interest and care towards each other.
- The behaviour of pupils and their care for others is outstanding. They are role models for each other and this contributes enormously to the spirituality and ethos of the school. Their behaviour for learning is very positive, they enjoy their RE studies, and they make good and outstanding progress over time.
- The quality of teaching is good, with much that is outstanding, leading to good and outstanding learning for all groups.

## The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is outstanding

- The senior leadership team and staff have driven improvement in all areas and work closely with the diocese and other local cluster schools to seek and to share good practice. The governing body are effective in bringing proactive support and challenge. Through on- going consultation with parents, staff, and pupils, the school has a realistic view of what has to be done to improve even further, and follows this through very successfully.
- The rigorous procedures for self-evaluation enable strengths and weaknesses to be highlighted quickly, and action taken to improve practice and outcomes. These inform future planning with measurable objectives which are monitored and re shaped as appropriate;
- The areas for development noted in the last inspection have been comprehensively addressed. The God Matters RE syllabus is now well embedded and adapted to meets the learning needs of every pupil. The assessment process tracks closely the progress of every individual child, as well as specific groups. The school through its leadership and practice is now seen as a centre of best practice and supports the other Samuel Partnership schools through fruitful joint moderation

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sessions. The prayer life of the school is integral and vibrant because of the development of prayer and reflection areas, increasingly left in the hands of the pupils themselves, which further the spirituality of the whole school community. An enthusiastic chaplaincy team now leads the pupils' ownership of prayer and worship. The governors have taken full advantage of diocesan training and are a knowledgeable and challenging body. As a result, the capacity to sustain and build on already outstanding provision and outcomes for Catholic Life and religious education is secure.

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

- Bring the quality of all teaching across the school up to the level of the existing outstanding practice, by deepening teachers' subject knowledge, and more consistently challenge pupils to make real intellectual effort.
- Build on the success and example of the Chaplaincy team, in order to provide more opportunities for all pupils to take the initiative in planning and presenting their own liturgies.
- Raise the profile of the study of other world religions through a more detailed and experiential approach.

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

**Grade 1**

#### **a) The extent to which pupils understand, contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school**

- Pupils have a good understanding of what it means to be in a Catholic school and how it differs from other schools. They can articulate for instance, the impact that the prayer life of the school has on their actions and how they relate to and care for others. This is a real strength of the school and can be witnessed in their prayer and caring interaction with others, as well as in their books. They were also fully involved in the whole school community reflection and discussions on the school mission statement following a day led by Sr. Judith Russi.
- The pupils play a proactive part in choosing, planning, and supporting fundraising initiatives for charities both local and global, such as CAFOD, Mission Together, the Swindon Women's Refuge, and the Foodbank. They were inspired by the Year of Mercy and want to sustain momentum through 'Making a Difference'.
- Pupils contribute not only by their outstanding behaviour both in lessons and around the school, but also through pupil conferencing, providing essential feedback, which is built into the school improvement plans. Pupils increasingly take

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on a range of responsibilities, which show they are alert to the needs of others, such as the high-profile Peer Mentors who have training in restorative justice.

- Pupils have a genuine respect for those from different backgrounds. They are encouraged to recognise and be sensitive to the needs of others, for instance, holding an inspiring Disability Awareness Day, but also working closely with the Chalet School for children with complex learning needs. There is a real sense of belonging and inclusion shared by all regardless of faith or none, which feeds into their understanding of British values and culture.
- The chaplaincy team takes the lead in promoting prayer life, planning assemblies, preparing the Masses, as well as running the Sanctuaries or quiet spaces during lunchtimes with meditation and activities. They are becoming more confident through practising the skills of planning and organising their own assemblies and liturgies. The school recognises the need to encourage wider pupil ownership by taking every opportunity where appropriate to pass the initiative on to all pupils.

#### **b) How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education**

- Pupils enter the school with low levels of attainment and understanding of religious knowledge and practice. They make good and better progress – exceptionally so in the Early Years - so that by the end of Key Stage 1 most are meeting expectations and some exceeding them. The quality of work, and the pace of progress over time, is good and much is outstanding;
- Progress at Key Stage 2 matches the excellent quality of the work seen in the earlier years, so that by the end of Key Stage 2 almost all pupils are making expected progress with many exceeding expectation. There is a growing understanding of the theology behind each topic, and very impressively they are becoming adept at reflecting on the meaning of the Gospel accounts and making links between scripture and other areas of their lives. This is greatly aided by the use of dialogue marking which is firmly embedded, and provides extra challenge at the end of every written task. Pupils respond to the teachers' challenging comments by producing responses which are reflective, strong on both knowledge and understanding, but also demonstrating the relevance of the topic to their own lives.
- Disadvantaged pupils, and those with special educational needs, make remarkable progress because of very effective planned interventions and the pro-active support of learning assistants. This success is a reflection of school's immense care and professionalism in providing support for less able pupils. Literacy is an initial barrier to learning for EAL children but, very quickly, this need is addressed with well planned support, so successfully that for example, in Year 5 the EAL pupils perform better than the others do.
- Discussions with pupils and responses in their written work show clearly that as they move up the school, they become more confident in using religious language in a meaningful way. Discussions with pupils were peppered by religious vocabulary and concepts. Their ability to learn independently, and with others, develops quickly, as demonstrated in the quality of their writing and their paired discussions. The opportunities for pupils to discuss more deeply in lessons, and to write more

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reflectively, could be encouraged even further with higher teacher expectations and challenge.

- Pupils are proud of their achievements and demonstrate a positive interest in learning new things and ideas. They feel confident in expressing their own opinions. When asked pupils were very positive about their learning and enjoyment of RE. One pupil said: 'I like learning about other religions. It teaches me to show respect to their God and beliefs, just as I have respect for mine'. Their conduct in lessons and around the school is outstanding, a reflection of the school's successful promotion of its core values and ethos.

**c) How well pupils lead, respond to and participate in the Prayer Life of the School**

- All pupils irrespective of faith background participate fully, and feel included, in the prayer life of the school. They show reverence, attentiveness, and willingness to play their part as observed in the singing assembly and the class prayers and meditations.
- Pupils are becoming more involved in the planning and preparation of their liturgies and assemblies. The liturgical calendar is at the core of the planning process and this is evident in the pupils' growing understanding and use of religious liturgical terms. Teachers are becoming more confident in enabling pupils to take the initiative, knowing when to intervene helpfully, or to step back. The school is rightly now focussing on enabling all pupils to develop skills of initiating and planning collective worship.
- Prayer is the heartbeat of Holy Family and the school is intent on involving parents in its spiritual life. The pupils value the many prayer opportunities, which punctuate the school day. They compose their own heartfelt prayers and reflections, which are displayed on the pupil-monitored prayer tables. The Sanctuary is well used for prayerful activities and pastoral support led by the chaplaincy, who also are learning to present Signalong in assemblies and class worship to help teach the prayers and hymns to the younger children.
- The sacramental and liturgical life of the school is reflected in the assemblies, Masses, and the celebrations, throughout the Church's liturgical year, of the life of Jesus, and the saints. The pupils are able to talk about the Sacraments of the Church and show a growing understanding of symbolism and the theology behind their sacramental and ethical development.

## **How effective are leaders and governors in developing the Catholic Life of the school?**

**Grade 1**

**a) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils**

- Leaders and governors very effectively promote, nurture, and sustain the Catholic ethos of the school as their primary concern and care, which is the main focus of their strategic planning. The inspiring head teacher has communicated a vision for

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the future and assured stability, continuity, and growth. through team building and distributive management.

- The governing body is a knowledgeable and practical influence in the life of the school. They meet all statutory, canonical, and diocesan requirements fully, and strive to bring to reality the call to be a People of Hope. They are well informed and proactive in all aspects of school life, keeping abreast of change through diocesan training such as Governing in a Catholic School and New to Catholic Education, and attending the national retreat for head teachers and governors.
- There is a commitment from every member of the staff to work together to achieve the best for the pupils, as well as promoting Catholic values across all the subjects. Staff morale and their investment in the school is outstanding and they are excellent role models for their charges.
- Robust and rigorous processes of self-evaluation ensure that judgements are accurate and reliable. This is achieved by constant monitoring through governors' school visits and learning walks, with findings reported back to the full governing body. The parish priest, who is also the chair of governors, is a frequent visitor and liaises frequently with the RE lead teacher and the chaplaincy team. The school takes the lead in chaplaincy development within the Samuel Partnership.
- The school frequently asks parents, staff and pupils their opinions as to what could be better. As a result of this feedback, the school leadership knows itself very well, can more accurately assess the impact of its actions, and can quickly re shape its improvement planning where necessary. Parents are kept informed of school events and the topics their children are studying through regular newsletters and email, so that they can be involved in home discussion of the RE topics covered. Links with parents and parish are very close and fruitful.
- The spiritual life of the staff is nurtured and celebrated. Staff prayers, retreat, and Inset days on spirituality and RE are an integral part of the timetable. This helps bind staff together in commitment and unity of purpose, sharing the same goals and values of the school's mission.
- There is at least one Inset day annually which is devoted specifically to Catholic life and spirituality which is focussed on instilling confidence in leading and directing the prayer life of the pupils through their own spiritual growth. Induction procedures for new staff are both supportive and inspiring. Leadership arranged for whole school training, staff and pupils, on meditation, and all staff are invited to lead a short meditation at the start of staff meetings.

**b) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the curriculum for Religious Education and relationship education, and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils**

- Leaders and governors use data and monitoring information intelligently and effectively, exercising careful oversight of the curriculum and learning outcomes. The governors receive termly reports from the head teacher but are also kept closely informed through feedback from the link governor who is a frequent visitor working closely with the RE lead teacher. Governors challenge, question, and hold senior leaders and staff to account, as is evident in a scrutiny of the minutes of governor's meetings.
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- The subject records are comprehensive with great attention to detail but also to the wider picture. The parents are invited to be part of their child's education through newsletters outlining the topics currently being studied. Their views, and the views of the pupils, are frequently elicited through conferencing, and any issues or problems arising properly addressed. For example, an individual parent might have misgivings about the teaching of other beliefs other than the Catholic Faith, or have a view about younger pupils involved in the sex and relationship programme. These are resolved with respect, genuine dialogue, and reassurance.
  - Subject development plans are drawn up and used as working documents, which are added to or re shaped during the course of each term. They are measurable objectives to be achieved over a stated time. Lesson observations, learning walks and book scrutinies are carried out regularly by senior staff and governors, and feedback has a real impact on improvements in teaching and learning. There is always work to be done in these areas and the leadership is determined in its push to improve the quality of both teaching and learning.
  - The provision for staff induction, in service training, and diocesan training is particularly supportive for the teaching of RE. This has resulted in teachers becoming more confident in assessment and in setting lesson learning objectives, thanks to the very supportive practical advice of the RE subject leader. Written feedback from teachers as to the impact this support has had on their teaching, is very positive.

## **How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?**

### **Grade 1**

#### **a) The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education**

- Teaching is effective in promoting purposeful learning, the engagement of the pupils, their enjoyment, and their overall good results. The pupils' outstanding attitudes to learning have a strong impact on their progress and achievement. Teachers have established excellent rapport with their charges. Learning assistants are involved in planning lessons with the SEN coordinator and the teacher, and these interventions clearly have a very positive effect on these pupils' remarkable progress.
- Teaching is good with some outstanding practice. A good range of teaching styles is employed, including strong questioning skills, which ensure pupils' concentration and engagement. However, this quality is not yet fully consistent across every class.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' presentation of work and effort. As a result, the pupils rise to the challenge and are able to contribute their own arguments and opinions in class discussions, while the more able write reflectively and at some length. This is illustrated many times over in the extended answers to the teachers' challenging comments. This is a fruitful teaching strategy, and worth devoting significant time to allow pupils to think through what they are writing.
- Teachers' skills and expertise in assessing pupils' progress are being successfully improved so that they can arrive at reliable judgements on individual achievement and progress over time. This is well led by the deputy head/RE lead who is spearheading best practice throughout the diocese, and more closely within the Samuel Partnership.

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**b) The extent to which the Curriculum promotes pupils' learning**

- The RE curriculum meets all Bishops Conference's requirements. It is broad and balanced so that students can explore and develop their own values and beliefs. They discuss themes such as prejudice, fairness, compassion and injustice, which they then link to the objects of their charity fundraising, and outreach to others in society who are more needy. Consistency and continuity in progression through the curriculum are carefully planned.
- The study of other world faiths is covered adequately, with time given to get a basic understanding of other major world religions, which promotes tolerance, respect, and understanding of others' beliefs, but it could be further enriched by a more experiential approach, using local resources and perhaps visits and visitors from other faiths. This inclusive school celebrates and appreciates the diversity and richness of other faiths and cultures within the school community.
- Provision for sex and relationship education is in place and approved by the governors adhering to diocesan guidelines. The wider curriculum successfully promotes spiritual, moral and vocational development, and is taught through the lens of the Faith.
- The Nurture provision in Holy Family is outstanding in its real care for the more needy children to prepare them for life and learning through family learning, individual support in the Sanctuary, anger management, and many other strategies for support. Alongside is the very close work with the parents through the school's Parent Support officer. There are many expressions of thanks from parents for the care shown to their children, and staff who go 'the extra mile' to help them.
- The use of scripture is embedded in the schemes of work, and bible referencing skills are developing. As a result, the pupils become adept at making links between the subject they are discussing, and salient references in Scripture, such as a parable, or Jesus' words, or an incident or personality in the Old Testament. This is a clear indication that the teachers are teaching for meaning, and enable the pupils to make sure links between what one believes and how one acts and lives.

**c) The quality of the Prayer life provided by the School**

- The outstanding prayer life of the school is inclusive and joyful. Prayer punctuates the school day and is part of every celebration. A well-planned timetable of Masses and assemblies follows the liturgical year, including traditional Catholic practices such as the Rosary, Advent and Lent celebrations, and the Stations of the Cross. There is a clear intent to encourage more pupils to organise and lead collective worship, using the excellent role modelling of the chaplaincy team.
- The parish priest makes an important and valued contribution to the spiritual life of the school, supporting its role in the wider mission of the parish and the universal Church. The adjacent parish church is an excellent resource and draws the school into the life of the parish.
- Teachers and pupils have created colourful and thought-provoking displays around the school, which remind the whole community of the liturgical cycle, and the topics the pupils are currently studying. A visitor is left in no doubt this is a Catholic school. The

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chaplaincy - run Sanctuaries inside and outside the school are popular centres for prayer and are an excellent daily support for the pupils' spiritual development.

- Parents and carers are invited to attend Mass and assemblies and many do. The school is keen to encourage more parents to become involved in the prayer life of the school and their children. The excellent newsletter keeps parents fully involved about what is going on in school, and very successfully outlines what each Year's term topic in RE is, with prompts and questions that the parents can use to reinforce the learning in school. Every opportunity is taken to for joint worship with other schools.
- Clear and critical processes for reviewing the quality and impact of assemblies and liturgies in order to make them even more uplifting and prayerful are in place and developing: for example, how to create a more prayerful atmosphere in assembly, or to avoid a too didactic approach. This might lead pupils and staff to reflect on the distinction between poetry and prayer, and a RE lesson.

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## Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 86 parental questionnaires returned. All were extremely positive about the school and the quality of their children's education. Some typical responses included:

*'We chose Holy Family school because of its ethos and values, in which the religious education is one part of it. It plays a vital role in the children's lives...spiritually and morally.'*

*'Distinctive is the family unity of the school, parish, teachers, pupils and priest. My child loves reading the Bible and talks daily about God and how He is a part of our life – something she learnt from school as we do not often discuss this as adults at home.'*

*'We were really impressed with the time the Head took to talk to parents and the atmosphere in the school – warm and welcoming.'*

*'Holy Family teaches children how to be kind and love each other. I have been very pleased with the way my child has been taught..... the teachers are really lovely and support her all the way... her learning has improved.'*

*'The children are happy, their behaviour is excellent, and the school deals with problems in a professional and understanding manner.'*

*'This is educating for a way of life'.*

*'The diversity is obvious which is important in today's society.'*