



INSPECTION REPORT

St. Edmund's Catholic Primary School

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DfES Number: 865/5204

Executive Head teacher: Mr Michael O'Keefe

Chair of Governors: Mrs Marie Sawyer

**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: 16 – 17 November 2017

Date of previous inspection: July 2012

Reporting Inspector: Mr J Skivington

Additional Inspector: Mrs A Barrett

Description of the school

St. Edmund's is a smaller than average-sized primary school, with a current roll of 200 pupils, of whom 33% are Catholic. It serves the parish of Saint Edmund's, Calne, and draws pupils from mainly White British background, in an area of some rural deprivation and social housing. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs, and pupils who have English as a second language (EAL), are below the national average. Pupils join the school with a baseline level of prior knowledge and experience of religious practice which are below expectation. The school has academy status and is in partnership with St. Joseph's Catholic primary school in Devizes.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 1

This is an outstanding school because:

- The inspirational executive headteacher, the governing body and all leaders are totally committed to the promotion and nurturing of the school's Catholic life and mission, and have very successfully sustained its overall outstanding provision and outcomes since the last inspection.
- 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.
- Pupils' behaviour for learning is very positive. They enjoy their RE lessons and make excellent progress over time. This is the result of good teaching, with some outstanding features and practice.

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

- The senior leadership team constantly drives improvement in all areas, and works closely with the diocese and in partnership with St. Joseph's school in Devizes to seek and to share good practice. The governors are a very effective, challenging body, with a 'hands on' approach and great experience in providing proactive support and challenge. Through 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 in its planning.
- The rigorous, securely embedded procedures for self-evaluation enable strengths and weaknesses to be highlighted quickly, and action taken to improve practice and

outcomes through a comprehensive and detailed development plan with clear, measurable objectives which are constantly monitored and reshaped as appropriate.

- The areas for development noted in the last inspection have been addressed and strengthened. The role of the chaplaincy team has been steadily developed and enhanced, and the (then) new curriculum 'Come and See' was successfully monitored and evaluated to ensure consistency and progression.
- The capacity to sustain the school's outstanding provision and outcomes for Catholic Life and religious education is a priority in the strategic planning of the governing body and senior leadership, in anticipating any future changes or challenges to the status quo.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for all pupils to become independent learners, extending and widening those learning strategies that help them best to develop a spirit of inquiry, and to actively seek to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Improve the quality and consistency of all teaching up to the level of the existing outstanding practice.

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 might differ from other schools. They can articulate, for instance, the impact that the prayer life of the school has on their actions and on their relationship with others. Their understanding of, and commitment, to the school's mission is very positive and practical. The mission statement has recently been re-appraised by the whole school community, it is regularly referred to by teachers, and in discussion with the pupils it is evident that they 'own' it and live it out in their daily lives.
- 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. This could be further encouraged through more pupil involvement in monitoring and evaluating Catholic life and the RE curriculum from the pupils' perspective.
- Pupils increasingly take on a range of responsibilities, which shows they are alert to the needs of others, with older pupils becoming outstanding carers and role models for the younger children. The almost tangible atmosphere of service to others is an outstanding strength of the school. This is exemplified by the older pupils helping the younger ones by paired reading of Bible stories, serving at the family tables at lunchtime, accompanying the little ones to assembly or Mass, or training to be 'play leaders'.
- The Leaders in Faith team is becoming a real driving force in sustaining and enriching the Catholic life of the school. Pupils apply to be chosen and pledge a commitment to become role models. Younger children see them leading reflections and respond well to this. This also encourages good pupil relationships across the school. They are involved in planning, presenting and then evaluating assemblies and the prayer spaces, as well as responsibilities for the 'Adytum' or school chapel. This should now give them the confidence to take the initiative in suggesting what they want to contribute, or have thought of doing, with little prompting by the teachers.
- Pupils have a genuine respect for those from different backgrounds and a heightened moral sense of their obligation to help others. This is evident in their charities and outreach to others in need, such as CAFOD, Mercy Ships, Missio and Mission Together. The beautifully presented Year of Mercy work portfolios contain extended, reflective writing on forgiveness and

compassion, as well as thoughtful, heartfelt prayers on becoming 'merciful like the Father' and addressing the question 'How can we bring hope to others?' with some practical ideas.

- There are strong links with the parish, with pupils participating in and leading both school and parish liturgies. They demonstrate a sense of belonging to the school, the parish, and the wider community.

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

- Pupils enter the school at varied levels of attainment and understanding of religious knowledge and practice, but generally below expectations. Taking account of their starting points, the proportion meeting expectations and exceeding expected progress by the end of Key Stage 1 is high. The quality and quantity of work and the pace of progress over time are good and much is outstanding.
- Progress at Key Stage 2 matches the excellent quality, quantity and consistency of the written work seen in the earlier years. By the end of Key Stage 2 progress is again good, with much that is outstanding. There is a deepening of understanding of the theology behind each topic, and pupils are able to reflect on the meaning of the Gospel accounts and make links between scripture and other areas of their lives. Learning from religion is a real strength and impacts significantly on their attitudes and behaviour towards others.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress as the other pupils because of very effective planned interventions, differentiated tasks and the proactive support of teaching assistants. The school has an accurate understanding of data and successfully tracks the progress of individuals and different groups closely in order to support pupils' learning. The pupils know where they are and what steps they need to take to improve because the level descriptions are in clear, child friendly language and are co-assessed by pupil and teacher.
- Pupils are at the stage where they could be encouraged to take more ownership of their own learning through pupil led discussion and more independent research opportunities. The pupils' enjoyment of RE could also be further enhanced through more 'risk taking' in lessons by fostering inquiry and questioning and imaginative, creative tasks.

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. They are enthusiastic singers and bring their own orchestra to add to the colour and quality of their worship. All 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.

- The Leaders in Faith are excellent role models as well as animators in the prayer life of the school. They regularly plan and lead assemblies in all year groups, and support the younger children. Whereas previously, teachers would assess the quality and impact of assemblies, the pupils themselves are now involved in evaluating, noting what aspects could have been better, such as speaking more loudly and more clearly, or arranging seating in ways that encourage engagement. They are also involved in monitoring the quality of the excellent reflective prayer corners, such as the Easter Prayer space. There is impressive photographic evidence of the marking of the Church's liturgical cycle and the school community's involvement.
- The school's prayer life contributes enormously to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils, including their understanding of the sacramental life of the Church. This is reinforced by the many displays highlighting the symbolism, the significance and the meaning of the seven Sacraments in the growing Christian's life.

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, inspired by the energetic headteacher. The governing body has a very knowledgeable and 'hands on' influence in the life of the school. They meet all statutory, canonical, and diocesan requirements fully, and strive to bring to reality the Bishop's vision for the diocese.
- They are well informed and proactive in all aspects of school life and their combined expertise is shown in the questioning and challenges throughout the curriculum committee's minutes, recording feedback after monitoring visits by the RE link governor. The governors have benefited from the strong partnership with St. Joseph's, Devizes in their shared journey of mutual support. The school has strong links with the diocese and is open to advice and support, such as the recent very fruitful joint review with a diocesan advisor.
- The very good induction process supports staff new to Catholic education, but also supports all staff in relation to Catholic life and RE. There is a willing 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 the investment by staff in the school are outstanding, and they are excellent role models for their charges.
- The school frequently asks parents, staff and pupils their opinions about 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 reshape its improvement planning where necessary. Parents are kept informed of school events and the topics their children are studying through regular newsletters and email. They attend Masses and assemblies whenever they can.
- The spiritual life of the staff is nurtured and celebrated, not only through regular Inset, but also, perhaps more powerfully, through the staff weekly morning prayer in the Adytum. This cements staff, Catholic and non-Catholic, together in commitment and unity of purpose, sharing the same goals and values of the school's mission, and hopefully gives them the confidence to trust the pupils to grow likewise.

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 RE curriculum and learning outcomes. The governors receive regular reports from the headteacher and the RE coordinator, but also keep themselves closely informed through frequent visits to the school. Governors challenge, question, and hold to account senior leaders and staff, as is evident in the feedback from learning walks and governor body minutes. More importantly, this detailed knowledge of the school enables them to ask the right questions and give the maximum support and encouragement to senior and middle leaders, and to the teachers and teaching assistants.
- 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 the 'Come and See at Home' initiative, which suggests how they can help their children at home, and which lists the Church's major feast days with short explanations. Their views, and the views of the pupils, are frequently elicited through conferencing, and any issues arising are fed into the subject development plans, and systematically addressed.
- The provision for staff induction, in-service training, and diocesan training, particularly in support of the teaching of RE, is outstanding. The school is well aware of pockets of subject knowledge which are not fully secure, and is addressing this area with extra support. This has resulted in teachers becoming more confident in assessment and in setting learning objectives. There is similar work being done in acquiring assessment skills, which is supported by cross moderation with St. Joseph's. The teachers and teaching assistants receive outstanding support from the RE coordinator.

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 very effective in promoting purposeful learning, the engagement of the pupils, their enjoyment, and their excellent outcomes. The pupils' outstanding attitudes to learning have a strong impact on their progress and achievement. Learning assistants are involved in planning lessons with the teacher, so that interventions clearly have the desired positive effect.
- Teaching is good with some outstanding practice. A good range of teaching styles are employed, including strong questioning skills, which ensure pupils' concentration and engagement. Where there are occasional weaknesses in planning for learning, or subject knowledge, teachers receive swift and effective support. The open plan classrooms engender an atmosphere of mutual support and common purpose.
- Where teaching is outstanding, the teachers have high expectations of pupils' presentation of work and intellectual effort. As a result, the pupils rise to the challenge and are able to contribute their own arguments and opinions, writing reflectively and at some considerable length. This is illustrated in pupils' workbooks, and in the Year of Mercy books, which have many examples of discussions and reflective writing. This could be encouraged further by including more diverse forms of learning to promote pupils' confidence as independent learners.
- The marking policy is well embedded and effective, especially where the teachers' comments are challenging, and pupils' respond thoughtfully and at some length. Less effective, in terms of driving progress over time, are comments which are simply congratulatory, with no next steps challenge. Pupils, however, do know what progress they are making through the teacher and self-assessment sheets inside their books.

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

- The RE curriculum meets all Bishops Conference requirements. It is broad and balanced so that pupils can explore and develop their own values and beliefs. They discuss themes such as peace, fairness, and compassion, which they then link to the objects of their charity fundraising and their outreach to others in society who are more needy. Consistency and continuity in progression are carefully planned. Original concerns about the required time allocation for the subject RE have been allayed, with carefully planned out-of-lessons reinforcement, and wider exploration of the topics being studied, successfully securing pupils' knowledge and deeper understanding. A watchful eye needs to be kept on the quality of this provision, and individual pupils' progress appropriately referenced.

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- The study of other world faiths, such as Judaism and Islam, through topics in the syllabus and visits to other places of worship, strengthens inclusivity because it ensures time to explore and understand other major world religions and to promote tolerance, understanding, and respect for others' beliefs. It also inculcates an appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures. Other polytheistic faiths, such as Hinduism, could fruitfully be introduced to widen the pupils' appreciation of the diversity of belief systems.
 - Provision for sex and relationship education, using the Journey in Love programme, is in place and is approved by the governors as adhering to diocesan guidelines. The wider curriculum successfully promotes spiritual, moral and vocational development, and is 'taught through the lens of the Faith'. The First Holy Communion preparation programme is run by the parish, supported by the school.
 - Pupils have the opportunity to explore and reflect on the themes of 'One World' and 'God's World' in some depth, reflecting Pope Francis' encyclical 'Laudato Si'.

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

- The outstanding prayer life of the school is inclusive and joyful. Prayer and singing punctuate the school day and are 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.
- Pupils with different religious beliefs are welcome to participate fully, but are also supported and affirmed in their own prayer rituals and key festivals and holy days. There is age-appropriate progression in traditional prayers as the pupils move through the school. The provision for prayer is closely monitored and nurtured by leaders and governors.
- 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 parish church is a well-used 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. The attractive prayer stations highlighting the Church's main seasons and feasts provide an invitation to pause for prayer and reflection. Parents and carers are invited to attend Mass and assemblies, and many do. The school strives to encourage more parents to become involved in the prayer life of the school. The excellent newsletters keep parents fully involved about what is going on in school. Every opportunity is taken for joint worship with other schools and the Leaders in Faith have the

opportunity to be together with other pupils in diocese-wide celebrations, such as their Commissioning services in Clifton Cathedral or Downside Abbey.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 45 parental questionnaires returned. All were extremely positive about the school and the quality of their children's education. Some typical responses included:

'We wanted a faith school and liked the school's values and ethos, and heard that the children are thought to be caring towards others. There seems to be good links between all year groups, including reading partners. Parents are welcomed into classrooms in the morning, staff and older pupils serve and sit with the younger pupils'.

'Lots of information and guidance for parents to help with children's learning'.

'The ethos of the school is great. Our daughter is able to progress and grow up in a nice environment with great values'.

'Community and family feel with good morals and values...the children's kindness towards each other'.

'Challenging young people through God to find meaning and value in their lives'.

'All the diverse nationalities are catered for with a strong religious element'.

'We chose St. Edmund's because it was the only school that emphasised the importance and centrality of God in the day to day life. My child comes home singing songs about God from assembly. All assemblies have a strong biblical message. I am amazed and grateful every time I go, particularly as society does not always support the Christian faith'.

'St. Edmund's welcomes family and nurtures pupils and values individual and diversity, stemming from a philosophy based on Gospel values.... teaching staff are professional and caring, and promote love and forgiveness'.