



INSPECTION REPORT

St John's Catholic Primary School
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DfE Number: 800/3424
URN: 109260

Headteacher: Mrs A Bennett
Chair of Governors: Mrs M Tayler

**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: 4th/5th July 2019
Date of previous inspection: 9th/10th July 2014

Lead Inspector: Mrs A Barrett
Additional Inspector: Mr J Skivington

Description of school

St John's is a larger-than-average Catholic primary school which serves the parishes of St Dunstan's, Keynsham, Our Lady and St Alphege, Ss Peter and Paul, and St John's, Bath. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 69%, with 19% from other Christian denominations and 2% from other faiths. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.

The proportion of pupils who have a SEN statement or an educational health and care plan is slightly above the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those speaking English as an additional language is above the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium is in line with the national average.

There have been significant changes in leadership since the last inspection. In September 2017, a new headteacher took up post, along with 2 acting deputy headteachers. One full time substantive deputy will take up post in September 2019. The headteacher has, in addition, spearheaded the development of RE across the school, working in close liaison with the school's experienced chaplaincy leader who retires at the end of the academic year.

An experienced RE co-ordinator and chaplaincy leader has been appointed for September 2019. She will continue to work closely with the headteacher and RE/Catholic life governor to build on developments to date and ensure continuity and progression.

The school is an outward looking community, strongly committed to promoting links with the parishes it serves and working closely with a group of Catholic schools as part of the Camino Catholic Partnership.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 1

This is an outstanding school because:

- The provision, leadership and governance of the Catholic life, RE and prayer life of the school are all outstanding. Leaders and governors are deeply committed to, and effective in, promoting the Catholic life of the school, placing this at the centre of all that they do.
- Pupils demonstrate a strong sense of belonging to this welcoming, inclusive Catholic community with its rich cultural diversity and its clear focus on globalisation.
- Behaviour across the school is exemplary and is rooted in Gospel values.
- Pupils make good progress in religious education (RE), with some achieving outstanding progress. Pupils' attitudes to all aspects of their learning in RE are consistently positive and have a good impact on the progress they make.
- Teachers are growing in confidence in their subject knowledge and in the new outcomes for RE. They are skilled practitioners who are fully committed to the teaching of RE and to improving their pedagogy in the subject.
- Staff provide the highest levels of pastoral care for pupils, with an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable provided by an experienced and highly committed SEN team.

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- The headteacher is an inspirational leader who provides an excellent role model for all members of the school community.
 - The school's charismatic chaplaincy leader has made a significant contribution to the prayer life of the school and has had a profound and visible effect on the spiritual and moral development of pupils, irrespective of their faith background.
 - The school is highly regarded by parents and has excellent links with the parishes it serves.

The capacity of the school community to improve is good

The capacity of the school to improve is good and continues to grow in strength, under the new leadership team and strong governance. The three areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection have been effectively addressed. The school has put in place effective strategies to bring about rapid improvement, with RE at the heart of everything.

There are now more extended opportunities for more able pupils to be challenged to achieve the higher levels more consistently; teaching continues to improve with the majority of lessons deemed to be good and some outstanding; levels of progress in each year group and each key stage continue to improve, particularly for more able pupils, so that pupils better understand the level they are working at and what they need to do to move to the next level.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable all teachers to continue to develop a high level of confidence in their RE subject knowledge expertise and their understanding of the breadth of teaching methods in order to engage pupils in their learning and make rapid and sustained progress;
- Embed the new diocesan units of work in RE, with a focus on developing pupils' skills of analysis and evaluation in AT3;
- Enable all pupils to contribute in a planned and systematic way to the school's evaluation of its Catholic and prayer life, and take a more active role in planning improvements to it;
- Provide support for the new RE/chaplaincy co-ordinator to ensure that the development of RE and chaplaincy continues to develop and grow under her aegis.

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

- Pupils enthusiastically embrace the many opportunities to participate in the Catholic life and mission of the school. They benefit hugely from the excellent links between the school and parish, with the parish priests being regular visitors to the school. The pupils are empowered to express pride in their own religious beliefs and cultural identity.
- Pupils demonstrate a strong sense of belonging to this welcoming, inclusive Catholic community with its rich cultural diversity and clear focus on globalisation. They embrace the school's holistic approach to education which enables them to live out its vision 'For everyone to shine, celebrate and grow', celebrating their individual gifts and talents.
- Pupils willingly participate in activities which enable them to contribute to the development of the school's Catholic character, such as their involvement in reviewing the vision and mission statement and in conducting audits on how the school reflects its Catholicity in the visible signs around the building. This, for example, resulted in the addition of the Stations of the Cross around the school, prayer tables in focal points and the inclusion of a statue of Mary outside the school hall.
- Pupils are alert to the needs of others, both within and beyond the school community, demonstrating an informed understanding of how to act in the light of the Gospel values in order to support others who are less fortunate. This is evident in their participation in a wide range of local charities such as donating to the Bath Food Bank at Harvest time, fundraising in Advent for the most marginalised and destitute people in rural South India through Reaching the Unreached (RTU), collecting for CAFOD in Lent and Summer Fair fundraising for charities they nominate.
- Pupils' understanding of the importance of service is further deepened through contact with local CAFOD representatives. There is also an active Mini-Vinnies group, who have met with SVP parishioners, who collect for the food bank.
- Pupils value the school's chaplaincy provision which now has a high profile across the school, including pupils from years 3-6. Pupils are growing in confidence in taking the lead in whole school events such as promoting the Rosary Group, helping prepare Masses and reflections and fund-raising activities such as the 'Fishy Fair'. They work closely with other chaplaincy teams in the Catholic school partnership, resulting in a joint chaplaincy plan.
- Behaviour across the school is exemplary and reflects the school's clear focus on all its members displaying 'firmness, kindness, consistency and fairness' and a behaviour policy which is rooted in John 13:34 'Love one another as I have loved you'. Consequently, pupils' conduct and relationships with each other demonstrates high levels of respect across the school.
- Pupils value the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development which enables them to be happy and confident individuals. This, alongside a child-centred education in personal relationships (RSE) prepares them for the next stage of their physical, social, emotional and spiritual development.

b) The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The school's mission statement permeates every aspect of school life and is a fulcrum for all that it does. The recently reviewed vision and mission statement, involving all members of the community in the process, is firmly rooted in the Catholic mission of the school and aptly inspired by St John's Gospel with its many references to light and Jesus being the light in the darkness. This, along with the strong chaplaincy provision, is highly effective in promoting the Catholic Life of the school.
- The school's vision 'For every child to shine, celebrate and grow' places a strong focus on helping every child to shine at something, celebrate their uniqueness and continue to grow and progress further in God's light. This is understood by all, and regularly revisited in all aspects of school life.
- There is a palpable sense of community, evident in the high quality of relationships and strong culture of welcome within this inclusive community. All staff promote high standards of behaviour and are excellent role models of mutual respect and forgiveness for pupils. They readily implement the school's mission across the curriculum and participate in and contribute to those activities which reflect the Catholic life and mission of the school.
- The school environment clearly reflects its Catholic identity and ethos through high quality vibrant displays, the visibility and centrality of religious artefacts and sacred spaces in both classes and corridors. These are concrete signs that the school's vision and mission are 'lived and breathed' in the everyday life of the school.
- The school is highly effective in promoting high standards of behaviour that reflect Gospel values and developing positive relationships between all its members. Consequently, relationships between staff and staff and pupils are exemplary.
- Staff provide the highest levels of pastoral care for pupils with an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable provided by an experienced and highly committed SEN team. Leaders and governors are attentive to the pastoral needs of all members of staff, ensuring that their needs are understood and catered for.
- Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), and Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) are carefully planned to reflect Catholic teachings and principles and have fully involved staff, governors and parents in the process. A new scheme, 'A Journey in Love' was introduced last year and plans are in hand to ensure that this is commensurate with the recently published (June 2019) diocesan guidelines.
- Plans are in place to enable pupils to engage in the Leaders in Faith programme, this is a development which could be further explored by the new co-ordinator.
- There is a strong sense of community and commitment amongst staff, driven, in particular by the headteacher and team of three governors who oversee this area. This commitment is evident in staff participation in relevant Continuing Professional Development (CPD) on Catholic Life, RE and RSE and in governors' attendance at all training or briefings provided by the diocese.
- All staff are aware of their responsibilities in promoting Catholic education and supporting children on their faith journey. One INSET Day each year is set aside to support the teaching of RE or developing spirituality.

c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- Leaders and governors are deeply committed to, and effective in, promoting the Catholic life of the school, placing the development of the Catholic life of the school at the centre of all that they do. They embrace and promote the Bishop's vision for the diocese through active participation in diocesan initiatives and attendance at training and conferences.
- Since her appointment in September 2017, the headteacher, supported by governors and the new leadership team, has continued to sustain and build on the school's strong tradition as a Catholic school. She has built on the best aspects of its Catholic life identified in the previous inspection and has rapidly moved it on apace to even greater heights. Empowered by their new vision and mission statement, and ongoing support from leaders and governors, all members of the community demonstrate an infectious enthusiasm for this next stage of the school's development. This bodes well for the future.
- The school has a range of very successful strategies in place for engaging parents. As a result, parents have an excellent understanding of the school's mission and are very supportive of it, as evident from responses to parental questionnaires. Parents value the regular communication from school through the newsletters, their involvement in developing the new mission statement and participation in the workshop on RSE. Parents from other faith communities are also invited to talk to pupils about their faith tradition.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the whole curriculum contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, and vocational development. This and other aspects could be enhanced further by embarking upon a systematic mapping of provision across the board and using this as a tool for further improvement.
- Professional development, focusing on the Catholic life of the school, occurs frequently and is engaging, well planned and effective. It is offered to all staff both through in-house training and accessing training offered by the diocese. This is often done in collaboration with other Catholic partner schools. One INSET day is devoted explicitly to focusing on enhancing the school's Catholic life and supporting all in their faith journey.
- Leaders and governors are highly ambitious for the school's Catholic life and lead by example, providing challenge and support where necessary. The headteacher, works in partnership with the experienced chaplaincy leader to oversee provision across the school. They, in turn, work closely with the link governor to effectively monitor and evaluate the school's Catholic life order to plan future improvements. The link governor (new to the role) benefits greatly from the wisdom and support of the previous chair of governors and current chair who have a particular interest in this area. There is a sense that 'no stone is left unturned'.
- Provision could be further strengthened by building on the work to date to enable all pupils to contribute in a planned and systematic way to the school's evaluation of its Catholic and prayer life and take a more active role in planning improvements to it.

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

- Overall, pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities across the key stages, with some achieving outstanding progress. There is no evidence of there being any significant variation between groups of children. Indeed, the school's open, inclusive culture has enabled all pupils to develop and grow. Pupils with special educational needs are making excellent progress due to highly effective planning on the part of teachers and support from teaching assistants.
- Pupils' attitudes to all aspects of their learning in RE are consistently positive and have a good impact on the progress they make. The excellent relations engendered by teachers create a happy and purposeful environment in which students enjoy their learning and are confident, keen learners who want to find out more. This was evident in lessons observed during the inspection and in discussions with pupils.
- Pupils enjoy their learning in RE and speak confidently about the progress they are making. As they progress through the school, they are developing an informed understanding of key religious concepts. The school's strong Catholic ethos, prayer life and parish links play a major role in supporting pupils' religious literacy. This is evident in their enthusiastic responses and involvement in assemblies and liturgies which demonstrate a high level of understanding of their class RE work.
- Pupils are able to use their knowledge and understanding of their learning in RE to reflect spiritually and ethically and on the importance of faith in action and Catholic Social Teaching (CST). Older pupils spoke fluently about the demands of religious commitment in everyday life and their response to it.
- Religious education plays an important part in developing children's faith as well as making a valuable contribution to their spiritual and moral development. Enrichment opportunities, such as the Year 5 retreat to Kilve Court, play an important part in enabling pupils to develop and grow in their faith.
- Pupils respond well to opportunities which extend their learning. They enjoy, in particular, more challenging approaches such as role-play, debate and hot-seating activities. There are many opportunities to write in depth, especially in relation to AT2 (engage, respond and learn from religion). Pupils take great pride in their work as evident not only in its quality of writing, but presentation. More opportunities, however, should be provided to develop pupils' skills of analysis and evaluation in AT3.

b) The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- Teachers are effective in planning high quality lessons which enable all pupils to make good progress in relation to their starting points. Teachers are alert to the needs of individuals in RE, using this to consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. As a result, teaching is consistently good and some is outstanding.

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- Teachers are growing in confidence in their subject knowledge due to the on-going support provided by the headteacher and chaplaincy leader both of whom have served on the Diocesan Working Party to develop assessment for mixed age classes. The regular in-house training provided by the headteacher alongside moderation of RE work with partner schools has paid dividends, accelerating progress for pupils across the key stages. The headteacher has been instrumental in creating a strong culture of sharing, praise and openness for all, so that teachers are confident in asking for help when needed. This, in turn, has enabled teachers to grow in their mastery of the subject and enjoy their teaching of it. Supporting one another through joint planning has also been highly beneficial.
 - Overall, teachers employ a wide range of teaching strategies to engage and motivate their pupils and, as evident in pupils' books and floor books, communicate high expectations to their pupils. This, alongside using good quality RE resources and deployment of a very effective team of teaching assistants, has made a significant contribution to pupils' enjoyment of the subject.
 - Teachers communicate high expectations to their pupils, as evident from the quality of work in pupils' books and whole class books.
 - Teachers set clear WALTs (We are learning to) and use on-going assessment within lessons to address misconceptions. This, combined with high quality feedback, ensures that pupils understand what they need to do to improve and are clear about their targets. Clear assessments are in place across the school, with each unit of work assessed, levelled and moderated at staff meetings.

c) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and in each key stage. The school follows the approved diocesan materials and God Matters programme. Work on other faiths is planned for systematically, to ensure that the whole school study another faith at the same time.
- Governors and leaders value the training provided by the diocese and are fully up to date with all aspects of this. Appointments to reserved posts are made in accordance with diocesan policy and teachers new to Catholic education attend diocesan training.
- Thorough and systematic monitoring procedures are in place in which governors and staff carry out learning walks, book scrutiny, pupil interviews and lesson observations. These are formally reported at both Committee and Full Governing Body Meetings, ensuring that all governors are aware of strengths and weaknesses in RE, Catholic and prayer life. In addition, governors regularly attend class assemblies, liturgies and whole school and class Masses.
- The headteacher and chaplaincy leader have worked, and continue to work, closely with the Diocese on the development of assessment, changing from levels to end of year outcomes. This, in turn, has been shared with all staff with 'Before You Begin' training prior to the teaching of each new unit. This has proved highly effective in ensuring that teachers'

knowledge and understanding of theology and Christian tradition is accurate and staff are confident in the delivery of materials provided by Diocese.

- The RE leader (headteacher) has a secure vision and track record for teaching and learning. She is an inspirational leader who provides an excellent role model for colleagues. She works closely with the chaplaincy lead and link governor for RE to undertake regular reviews of the subject, engage in moderation and lead CPD for staff.
- Leaders and governors are effective in using monitoring data to evaluate the school's performance in religious education in order to plan future improvements. RE data is gathered and scrutinised on a regular basis to identify areas of strength and areas for development and shared with governors.

a) How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's prayer life

- Every pupil, regardless of their faith background, feels welcome to participate fully in the school's rich prayer life, which punctuates the day. The strong tradition of prayer, evident in the last inspection, is still an important feature of this Catholic school. Consequently, the experience of living and working in this vibrant and prayerful community makes a significant contribution to the spiritual and moral development of all pupils.
- Pupils across the key stages demonstrate high levels of interest and enjoyment in the school's prayer life. For example, the whole school assembly observed during the inspection was a joyful and prayerful occasion. Pupils responded with reverence, actively participated throughout, sang readily, reflected in silence and confidently joined in community prayer.
- Pupils value the many opportunities to engage in worship in both school and church. There are high levels of participation in seasonal celebrations such as reflections on the Stations of the Cross in Lent and the Christingle service during Advent.
- There has been a notable improvement since the last inspection in enabling pupils to acquire skills in planning and leading prayer as evident in the child-led reflections observed by inspectors in EYFS and Year 5. This is now a regular feature of class worship where all pupils, supported by the headteacher, are 'skilled up' to lead these.
- Pupils use a variety of approaches to prayer which include scripture, religious artefacts, liturgical music and other forms of prayer both traditional and contemporary.
- The profile of chaplaincy has been raised within the school, with pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 taking the lead in whole school prayer events, whole school and class assemblies and full involvement with the chaplaincy leader in planning Masses.

b) The quality of the prayer life provided by the school

- Prayer is the heartbeat of every school celebration and is central to its life. The school provides a loving, prayer-centred and inclusive environment for all, whatever their faith background. The rich provision for the prayer life of the school makes a significant contribution to the spiritual life of the whole school community.
- The school has an established track record of providing opportunities for the pupils to develop spiritually through its prayer life, due in no small measure to the efforts of its charismatic chaplaincy leader and headteacher. Pupils' seasonal celebrations, such as Advent and Lent are of a high standard, with high levels of participation, such as Reflections on the Stations of the Cross, both in church and at school. There are also regular, well-planned opportunities to participate in collective worship and class prayer
- Children have regular opportunities to participate in Mass, including whole school Masses at the beginning and end of every term, Holy Days of Obligation and the feast days of the school's three parish saints. Every class attends a parish Mass at Our Lady and St Alphege church, on a rotational basis, and each phase has an annual Mass. In addition, the school joins with each parish at least once a year for Sunday Mass.
- The school supports the parish in its sacramental preparation through a whole school reconciliation service and the provision of an opportunity for each pupil to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

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- Pupils' prayer life is enriched through a range of prayer opportunities outside the classroom, such as the Y5 retreat experience, participation in a pilgrimage to Glastonbury, May Parade in Bath in honour of Our Lady, Christingle Service and Y6 Leavers' Mass at Clifton Cathedral.
 - Prayer and collective worship is given a high priority in terms of planning, resourcing and support for staff. Consequently, pupils' and staff's experiences of this are of a high quality and valued by all.
 - Displays in and around the school are vibrant and supportive of the school's Catholic life. Prayers are displayed in the classroom, with a prayer table acting as a focal point for prayer and reflection in both classrooms and in the corridors. Each class has a floor book recording class reflections and contributions to assemblies.
 - Links between the school and its parishes are exceptionally strong and provide a model of good practice. The parish priests are valued members of the school community and regular visitors to the school. The school benefits greatly from its close proximity to Our Lady and St Alphege and the support of the parish priest. The generous decision to allow part of the presbytery gardens to become a Forest School will not only provide regular opportunities to develop children's confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a natural environment but will provide opportunities to reflect and respond to Pope Francis' Laudato Si encyclical and care for our common good.

c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the prayer life of the school

- The headteacher and chaplaincy leader are highly effective in planning and leading quality prayer and collective worship. Together they are inspiring models of best practice for the whole community. The chaplaincy leader, in particular, has an extensive understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts and is skilled at making these accessible to both pupils and staff through liturgical music.
- Leaders and governors have continued to sustain and build on the school's strong tradition as a prayerful community seeing this as an ongoing whole school priority for all. A clear focus is placed on modelling and supporting important prayer opportunities within the school community such as supporting First Holy Communion preparation, the Diocesan Education Mass and the Year 6 Leavers' Mass.
- The governing body, under the strong leadership of the chair of governors, previous chair and RE link governor, are a formidable team who are highly ambitious for the prayer life of the school. They are overtly committed to the school's mission and work closely with the headteacher and chaplaincy leader to monitor and evaluate the provision for this. They visit the school and attend assemblies, Mass and liturgies both formally and informally.
- Priority is placed on the professional development of staff to plan prayer and collective worship, with the chaplaincy leader supporting and signposting staff and pupils in accessing a range of prayer and worship ideas and resources.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were **133** parental questionnaires received. They were extremely positive about the school and their children's education. Some typical responses included:

'Spirituality permeates the culture, providing a calm, reflective and prayerful environment where all cultures and religions can thrive in the Catholic family'

'The Head is clear and concise, knowing exactly how to lead and it completely stands out through the super staff at the school'

'The headteacher is very approachable and accessible. A credit to the school'

'Small, friendly, family feel. Well led and managed'

'The sense of community and friendship throughout the year groups is evident in all aspects of school life and this is re-enforced by the Catholic ethos and culture of the school'

'I like the diversity of cultures and language. And for me, it has a village feel, even though it's in the city. responsive and progressive'

'It is a Catholic school and part of our parish. And when we visited, the values and ethos of the school were displayed and exemplified throughout the school by visuals, role and pupil participation'

'It has a holistic approach to the children's education'

'It is a very well-run school and is strong in teaching my children good morals and ethics'

'... the calm and kind nature of the children and atmosphere within the school. The size of the school, its location to St Alphege. It has a strong sense of parent community within the school and fantastic headteacher'

'Welcoming staff...our daughter was immediately comfortable there'

'High standards, strong sense of faith and community' 'The balance between religion and secular education'

'The kindness shown by the children, the professionalism of the staff and never-ending drive for improvement of the SLT and extra curriculum offer'

'Friendly, welcoming environment. Friendly, accessible staff. Big focus on values instead of school ranking!'

'Inclusive and welcoming to all and puts the interests of the children at the front of everything it does'

'I love the whole school approach to learning and also its inclusive nature. We find that everyone is very kind, caring and supportive'

'Everyone is committed to making it the best it can be. The teaching staff are very supportive'

'It is such a lovely school and I feel very grateful that my daughters are getting such a good education from a truly lovely selection of teachers, teaching assistants and staff'

'The love and affection and deep knowledge of each child'

'Very organised school in terms of communication, friendly staff'

'The level of emotional care given to children. The amount of inclusion and communication with parents'