



DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

St George's Catholic Primary School

The Mount, Taunton, Somerset TA1 3NR
Telephone: 01823 284130
e-mail address: sch.351@educ.somerset.gov.uk

DfE Number: 933/3438

Headteacher: Mr Peter Hanratty
Chair of Governors: Mrs Helen MacConnell

**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: 6-7th July 2016
Date of previous inspection: 11-12th May 2011

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington
Additional Inspector: Mrs Celia Dolan

Description of School

St George's is an average sized Catholic primary school within the Diocese of Clifton, serving the Catholic community of Taunton and surrounds. There are currently 220 pupils on roll, of whom 93% are baptised Catholics. Pupils come from mixed and often challenging socio economic backgrounds. The percentage of students with EAL and from ethnic minority groups has increased significantly since the last inspection to 53%, mirroring the increase in the number of Polish, Filipino and Keralan communities. Currently there are 27 pupils designated as SEN. The present RE subject leader has been in post since September 2015.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Requires improvement in order to be good;
Grade 4: Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 2

This is a good school because:

- there are effective formal structures, and rigorous processes to monitor and evaluate the quality of Catholic life and RE, and this reflects the importance leadership and governance place on the constant promotion and nurturing of the school's Catholic life;
- pupils' behaviour is outstanding, as is their proactive involvement in the Catholic life of the school and collective worship. They can discuss critically the quality of their learning and are able to articulate their understanding of the values promoted by the school;
- the school is highly regarded by parents, who feel the school listens to their views and acts upon them. It has a vibrant Catholic inclusive ethos, which is open and welcoming to all regardless of faith background, and ensures that all pupils understand other belief systems and cultures in today's Britain;
- the quality of teaching and learning in RE is good, resulting in good progress and achievement over time for all groups of pupils.

It is not yet outstanding because:

- not all teaching is consistently good across the school. The teachers' expectation of what the pupils can achieve is not always sufficiently high;
- the assessment data on pupil achievement does not always match the quality of the work recorded in pupils' books.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

- Positive progress has been made in addressing the issue highlighted in the previous inspection in relation to assessment, with more frequent, termly assessment, and with ongoing work to improve the consistency and reliability of assessment.
- Staff morale and commitment is very high, and the school leadership has the full support of parents and students.

- Governance and leadership have the capacity and commitment to secure improvement for all.

What the school should do to improve further

- Monitor more closely the assessment judgements of pupils' progress over time, checking they are robust and reliable, and are an accurate picture of individual progress, so that teachers can plan better matched learning objectives to pupils' learning needs.
- Ensure all pupils are fully challenged in lessons, particularly through questioning which checks understanding as well as challenging and extending their understanding, and to improve further the quality and quantity of their written work including their responses to their teachers' formative comments.

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

Grade 2

All pupils benefit enormously from the vibrant Catholic life of the school and make an outstanding contribution towards the ethos of the school, not only by their excellent behaviour and care for each other, but also by their growing involvement in planning, presenting, and evaluating their prayer life. They can articulate the distinctive nature of the school and interpret its values and mission through, for example, the Mind, Body and Spirit statement which is prominently displayed around the school and has become part of their school life. Pupils are used to thinking about their faith and are very confident in expressing their voice and opinions through verbal feedback and questionnaires. Their participation in evaluating the Catholic life of the school is key, because it enables leadership to assess more reliably the quality of its provision, and this in turn feeds into future planning and reshaped objectives. The pupils also take the initiative in fundraising events supporting local and global charity organisations: this encourages them to be alert to the needs of others, seeking justice for all within and beyond the school community. A colourful Generosity Vine display, and a live screen is a constant reminder of the need to be open, care for, and respect others. There is a real sense of belonging – to the school, to the parish, to the wider Church and the global community, but also personal involvement. The chaplaincy team reviews the prayer life of the school, and as representatives of the other children have fruitful and animated discussions on a whole variety of religious and moral questions. They also play an active part in leading prayer at assemblies and school Masses. The older pupils look after the younger ones and they are excellent role models as they accompany them into assembly.

The pupils' attainment in RE is an improving picture and reflects the generally good progress they make, particularly given the high proportion of pupils with EAL. The pupils in the early years make particularly swift gains in knowledge and understanding. This pace slows across the key stages linked to some inconsistency in teaching, but picks up again so that by the end of Year 6 progress for all groups of pupils is good. Most pupils grow in confidence in their ability to use religious language in a meaningful way, but also to make links between what people believe and how they behave towards others. This is because there are many opportunities for them to reflect on our faith story in relation to their lives. The close links with the parish places them in the mission of the church, and enables them to celebrate key events such as the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. At the same time, they grow to respect and value the faith and traditions of other religions. Their behaviour for learning is outstanding and they show a genuine interest and enjoyment in the subject. Where teachers have high expectations pupils are actively encouraged to become independent and thoughtful learners. They would benefit from the opportunity on occasion to write more freely and reflectively at length on the impact and relevance of their learning.

The inspectors were impressed with the genuine reverence and respect shown by the pupils both in the assembly and class prayer, even the youngest being able to share simple prayers with the rest of the class. They also help to set up the focal areas for class prayer. A good number of the older pupils are confident in helping to plan and lead collective worship, not only in school but also at the parish Masses. All pupils participate willingly, regardless of faith background or none, for instance, in serving or reading at Mass, or monitoring collective worship, and more are growing in confidence to play a leading part. Opportunities to develop

their understanding of the sacramental life of the church are well used. The new parish priest is creating new links with the school and working closely to ensure that the Mass is accessible to all the children, and to help their understanding and appreciation of the importance of symbols, scripture and traditional prayers. The parish runs the sacramental preparation programme for First Communion in close collaboration with the school. The quality of the school's prayer life contributes enormously to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and vocational development.

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

Grade 2

Governors and leaders work very successfully together to ensure that the promotion of the school's Catholic life is at the centre of its strategic direction. This is immediately evident to any visitor to the school and is the result of constant review and improvement. The whole school community is enveloped in a stimulating very Catholic environment, with displays and religious symbols which educate and challenge everyone to reflect on their faith and how they can live it out in their daily lives. Provision for staff induction and spirituality INSET which further develops an understanding and commitment to the Church's mission in education is strong. New teachers to the school are very well supported. Links with the diocese are effective and all Bishop's Conference requirements fulfilled. Self-evaluation of the school's Catholic life is well embedded. There are plans to have a formal re visit of the school's mission statement which will involve pupils, parents, staff and governors. The Catholic life audit involves all staff and subjects. The Year of Mercy has been successfully planned together with the pupils themselves, and has a high current profile. The head teacher's vision is successfully and very effectively communicated to all levels of the school community with very positive outcomes. Regular feedback surveys ensure that the views of students and parents inform future planning. Links with parents are especially strong. The school is highly regarded by parents, who consider it to be excellent in its provision and Catholic ethos.

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is frequently monitored through lesson observations and walks, book scrutiny and eliciting feedback from the pupils themselves as to what lesson activities help them to learn better. Under the new subject leadership, the monitoring progress is more rigorous and the areas for improvement are being highlighted and fed into both the RE improvement plan and teachers' CPD training. A successful start has been made in bringing the quality of teaching up to the level of the best practice.

Governors ensure close oversight of Catholic life and Religious Education through an effective hands on involvement in school life. There are frequent visits, which are recorded, and evaluation fed back to the main governing body so that governors can keep themselves fully briefed and up to date. There is a clear record of their analysis of reviews and reports and what feedback, if any, was given in terms of questioning, challenge and action to be taken. They are keen to understand and become active participants in local Catholic education issues and diocesan deliberations. Together with the diocese and the head teacher they are a knowledgeable and critical group who hold the school to account through processes, which are robust and feed into performance management targets.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 2

Teaching is good over time and leads to good progress across both key stages. There is some practice which is better than good. Teachers are knowledgeable and have a strong rapport with the students. Learning is good and better when teachers teach for meaning, so that pupils not only have secure factual knowledge, but a deepening understanding of the theology behind what they are learning and its relevance to their own lives. For this they have to make real intellectual effort. The feedback from pupils on what helps them to learn better enables teachers to adapt their teaching strategies to more precisely meet their charges' learning needs. However, this does not always translate into practice in the classroom. Some teacher expectation could be higher, presenting more challenge in supplementary questioning, and also in expecting good quality responses from pupils to their teacher's helpful comments on their written work. Furthermore, opportunities should be created for more extended, reflective writing so that pupils have time to collect their thoughts and record them. This will help to produce better quality evidence when the teacher comes to assess levels of attainment and progress over time.

Assessment processes are in place but not yet sufficiently reliable to impact fully on improved learning over time. Vital to this process is the constant check for accuracy especially in referencing levels of attainment. The marking of pupils' work is successfully embedded and provides them with clear, formative comments. Its effectiveness and fruitfulness, however, depends equally on the quality and depth of the pupils' response and the time and care they take.

The religious education curriculum meets all Bishops' Conference requirements and is responsive to diocesan guidelines. It is constantly reviewed and updated. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a rich provision for students' spiritual, moral and vocational development. Pupils are able to reflect on the faith story of other religions. Multi faith and multi cultural maturity is a real strength of this school. There are numerous opportunities in the curriculum for the children to participate in the prayer life of the school, including Masses, whole school liturgies, assemblies, chaplaincy, and retreats, all of which they enjoy and appreciate. There is always time for quiet reflection and stillness in the lovely prayer area at the heart of the school.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 101 parental questionnaires returned. All were very positive in their views of the school, highlighting a strong sense of inclusion, Catholic ethos, inspiring leadership, respected in the local community, praise for the inspiring head teacher, caring staff and strong moral Christian values. Some typical responses to the question 'Why did you choose this school' included:

'The emphasis on developing children as individuals...this school's 'Mind, Body, Spirit' ethos really runs through every aspect of school life'

'The inclusive and welcoming atmosphere cannot be beaten. All the staff are understanding and really care about the children'

'The school has a happy, caring nature. Its strong sense of belonging to a family'

'The teachers, children, and parents have a family like bond that I've seen in few schools'

'The Catholic education is second to none with a mix of various cultures...our children thrive in it'

'A strong cultural diversity and ethos. Everyone comes from a different background, but in my children's eyes, they are all the same. This is exactly how I want my children to grow up'