



INSPECTION REPORT

St. Catherine's Catholic Primary School
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Executive Headteacher: Mr Andrew Henstridge
Head of School: Miss Sarah Burke
Chair of Governors: Mrs Anne-Marie Long

**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: 11-12th December 2019
Date of previous inspection: October 2014

Reporting Inspector: Mr J Skivington
Additional Inspector: Mrs A Fowler

Description of school

St Catherine's is one form entry Catholic Academy serving an urban area of Swindon with 214 pupils on roll. It is one of two Catholic primary schools serving the same parish. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is above average (27%), and the proportion of pupils with English as an Additional language (EAL) is also above average (27%). The proportion of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP), is 11.9%. The school is a stand-alone academy looking to become a MAT with its other parish school St. Mary's. The school has an executive head who spends time equally between the two schools. An associate head teacher has the role of Head of School and deals with the day to day running of the school. St. Catherine's is a member of the diocesan Samuel Partnership. In November 2017 the school received a RE Monitoring Visit.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 2

This is a good school because:

- The outcomes, the provision, and the leadership and management of Catholic life are overall outstanding. The pupils' contribution to the evaluation of the Catholic life of the school is good. Their behaviour towards each other, and in lessons and around the school, is outstanding. The provision and leadership and management are both outstanding.
- The outcomes, the provision and the leadership and management for religious education (RE) are all good. The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding practice observed. Pupils' achievement and progress are good. The leadership and management of RE in monitoring and planning for improvement is also good.
- The outcomes, the provision, and the leadership and management of the prayer life of the school are overall good, with outstanding features. The pupils' involvement in its planning and evaluation is good. The provision for the prayer life of the school is good. The effectiveness of the leadership and management in monitoring and evaluating the provision for the prayer life of the school is good.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is good.

- The areas for development highlighted in the previous inspection – to improve the rate of progress in Early Years and Year 1, to strengthen the programme of monitoring and evaluation in RE: and to strengthen the role of the RE link governor, have all been addressed and improved significantly. This was confirmed by the 2017 RE monitoring report. There is a stable teaching staff who are highly committed to the mission of the school, and who are successfully

undertaking, with enthusiasm and determination, the relevant training and courses to improve their subject knowledge and expertise. Staff morale is high. Parental approval, appreciation, and support for the school is unanimous. This is a school that knows itself well. It is on the road and close to achieving outstanding status.

What the school should do to improve further

- To establish an explicit evidence base which fully encapsulates the quality of the school's embedded practice.
- To encourage pupils to become even more involved in the systematic planning and evaluation of the school's Catholic life and Prayer life.
- To use progressive mapping in RE which links to PSHE and other aspects of the curriculum.
- To employ scaffolding which will support pupils in reaching a greater depth of understanding (Attainment Target 3).

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

- Pupils appreciate and value the Catholic life of the school, as expressed in the school's mission statement: 'Where Jesus is the centre of all that we do'. They understand the link between lesson and mission and come to live the values the school promotes. They were involved in the Vision and Values whole school reflection and contributed their own ideas as to what it meant for them. In practice they value and respect themselves and others. They are able to articulate what is special about being in a Catholic school and are given opportunities to express their opinions. This year's planning focus is on developing a framework allowing pupils more autonomy, knowing what they are responsible for and when.
- The pupils' outstanding behaviour conduct and attitudes around the school reflect its Catholic character. Their care for one another, particularly the older pupils for the younger children, is an embedded behaviour and demonstrates the values inculcated by the school. They willingly assume roles of responsibility if and when they are offered, and through this have a growing understanding of vocation.
- Most pupils accept the responsibilities of living in a Catholic school community. They take on positions of responsibility for a variety of charities and outreach the local community, through the school council and the chaplaincy team. They live out the school mission of service and stewardship by supporting global and local charities, such as CAFOD, Cities of Sanctuary, the Harbour project, and the local Foodbanks.
- They contribute to the Catholic character of the school through class worship which is based on the school Values. Pupils nominate others who have lived out the values in an exemplary way, but everyone's efforts are acknowledged and affirmed. Through their participation in visits and diocesan activities they very effectively take the Catholic life of the school to others.
- The school's pastoral care is a real strength particularly through the Nurturing Human Wholeness programme, with the support of the school council anti bullying message, the chaplaincy team, buddies, and safe spaces such as The Sanctuary and the Ruby garden.
- The pupils' interest and engagement in spiritual, moral, and ethical issues is amply evident in the splendid Floor Books which are a valuable record of their personal development through art, history, poetry - all expressing the values they are living out. This is very much a cross curricular exercise

in all but name, and could fruitfully be used as an evidence base to assess their progress and achievement in RE.

- The chaplaincy team meets weekly and the sixteen members are increasingly taking the lead in the Catholic life and prayer life of the school, their activities recorded on their attractive website. They have planned and presented whole school assemblies, choosing hymns and prayers for celebrations such as the school's Golden Jubilee Mass with the Bishop. They update the displays around the school and in the classrooms and prepare the reading of the Week. The Sanctuary is an oasis of calm and reflection and is very popular and busy particularly during lunchtimes. They are very keen and capable of doing more on their own initiative, as they become more autonomous and develop the skills of evaluation and recording their activities to improve their impact.
- Pupils are happy, well- rounded individuals and well prepared for the next stage of their physical, emotional, and spiritual development, particularly through the PSHE programme which is linked to the school values, and the education in personal relationships. The new Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) programme is substantially planned and will be in place for the start of the new term in September 2020. The school also provides many opportunities for the pupil's spiritual and moral development across the curriculum.

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

- The provision for the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The school's mission and Catholic ethos are at the centre of all the school does and this is very evident in the environment and the colourful displays around the school. This is more widely shared through the parish and on the school's website.
- St. Catherine's is a welcoming and inclusive community where all are valued and invited to participate. As a result, all have a strong sense of belonging to a community that celebrates difference and diversity. The displays around the school indicate the pupils have a strong sense of their place in the wider Church and worldwide issues.
- Very effective pastoral support and care is given to all and this is a real strength. This is effectively modelled by governors, senior leaders and all adults involved in the children's lives. All staff are helped through example and CPD to understand the Catholic nature of the school, and as a result they become fully committed to its mission and are real role models for the children.

- The parish priest is a frequent visitor in the school and a vital support in developing the spiritual life of the school and parish community. Having two Catholic schools in the same parish and the church being some distance from the school makes parish links a challenge, but the partnership with St. Mary's is strong, and programmes such as First Holy Communion preparation are shared and run by the parish.

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

- Leaders and governors are strongly committed to promoting the Catholic ethos of the school as their first priority, and they are closely involved in the school. They encourage stronger links with the parish and both leadership and governors regularly attend Sunday Mass and parish functions. They offer excellent models of good practice as leaders of Catholic life.
- The quality and frequency of induction and CPD for staff to develop their understanding and commitment to the Church's and the school's mission is very effective, with frequent Inset both in school, and with the Catholic Schools partnership, on Catholic life and RE.
- The governors monitor the quality of Catholic life regularly and it is a standing item in the Governors Minutes. They visit the school and attend assemblies and liturgies both formally and informally. The accuracy, consistency and rigour of systems for the analysis and evaluation of the impact of the Catholic life of the school on pupils and staff is work in progress, especially in terms of detail, the mapping of objectives, and clearly defined impact statements.
- Leaders and governors are well thought of by the parents, and they offer models of good practice and commitment to the Catholic ethos of the school. The parents are given regular opportunities to comment on their views of the school and its effectiveness. In the parental questionnaire for this inspection there were 37 replies, all of them unanimous in their praise and gratitude for what the school provides for their children.
- Governors are aware of the Pastoral Vision for the Diocese –Future full of Hope- and keep themselves involved through diocesan training, such as the Foundation Governors training this year, training for new governors, and refresher training. A Chaplaincy and RE coordinators day was attended in October this year. Governors and school leaders are open to advice and collaboration with the other partner Catholic schools in the Samuel Partnership, and the ties with St. Mary's are particularly close and fruitful.

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

- Pupils come to the school from varied backgrounds and with different levels of knowledge and understanding. There is better progress in Early Years and Year 1 compared to the rate of progress recorded the last inspection report. Pupils make a good start in the early years thanks to effective teaching and a creative use of drama, role play, and art, making good progress for their starting points, so that by the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils have reached their expected level of attainment and increasing numbers exceeding their targets. The generally good progress continues in the later years, with some inconsistencies linked to weaker teaching. However, by the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils have made the expected level of progress, with 13.6% exceeding their target.
- Pupils with special educational needs or with disabilities make good progress thanks to the help they receive from very supportive teaching assistants, and planned intervention. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) quickly catch up with their peers in terms of literacy and make similar good progress.
- Where the progress of learning is not consistent it is often because the learning tasks are not sufficiently differentiated and scaffolded, or do not reflect and support the stated learning outcomes. The pupils' religious literacy develops well as they go through the school, but there are gaps in understanding some key concepts, such as Sacrament. They are, however, able to make the link between belief and action, between the topics they are studying, and their own lives and experiences. There is evidence that pupils are making steady progress in deepening their understanding, and in Year 6 the AT3 (Attainment Target) is becoming evident in their written work and the Floor Books.
- Pupils enjoy their RE lessons, and their interest, enthusiasm and behaviour for learning are outstanding. They work well in pairs, and in groups. On occasion, their presentation of written work is variable in its neatness and quality - reflecting the level of care and pride they take in their work, and their teachers' expectations. However, there is clear evidence of good and better progress over time, in line with diocesan expectations, and growing opportunities to encourage them to write more reflectively and in depth, and to support their statements with quotations and examples from the Scriptures.
- The use of learning ladders is having an impact on the progress of older pupils but is still in the early stages. Pupils are able to discuss topics quite

fluently with insight and their verbal input into discussions, and off book tasks could fruitfully be referenced by teachers to secure recorded evidence of their achievement and progress. Assessment for learning is effective when teachers plan closely with the teaching assistants especially to support weaker learners.

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

- The quality of teaching is generally good and promotes learning, as well as the enjoyment and progress of the pupils. Within this good judgement the inspection observed teaching that was better than good, but also teaching that could be more effective. Teachers use a good range of strategies including art, music, drama and role play which the pupils enjoy, and which helps them to learn.
- Where teaching is good and better, teachers have a good rapport with the pupils and have high expectations of effort. Questioning is strong where it is not closed, where it checks understanding, but also challenges pupils to think more deeply and provide reasons for their opinions and make links to scripture and their life experience. Teachers benefit from seeing outstanding practice being modelled by other teachers in the school and across the Schools Partnership.
- Independent and collaborative learning is successfully encouraged and could be further supported by scaffolding both for expected outcomes, but also to encourage writing at greater depth.
- The school is well aware of teachers' confidence levels in teaching the subject, and it is a developmental objective with Inset both in the school and the excellent uptake of diocesan training and courses. Teachers are highly motivated and committed to the school and its values and are open to improving the impact of their RE lessons on their pupils' learning about, and learning from, religion.
- The marking policy is well embedded but not always challenging and successful in directing pupils' learning, evident in the varying quality of the teachers' comments and the pupils' responses. Challenging comments offer the pupils opportunity to improve their work and provide the spur to think and write independently. The learning ladders enable pupils to know what progress they are making, and what the next steps are.

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

- The evaluation of RE provision is an area of leadership and management which although good could be even more incisive and a better driver of

improvement. Leaders and governors monitor and track RE through lesson observations and book scrutiny, and the systems are already in place, but their evaluation of impact and any recommendations for improvement, and any follow up, could be more clearly evidenced in writing and seen to be making a difference.

- The RE subject leader, the Executive Head, the head, and the link governor for RE, are inspiring in their support for the teachers. They, together with the support provided through diocesan training and collaboration with the other RE leaders in the partnership, are making real progress in raising the already good teaching and learning to outstanding. The RE curriculum meets the Bishops' Conference requirements, as well as any additional requirements of the diocesan Bishop. The new diocesan system is having a positive and challenging impact and is steadily being adopted. Extracurricular enrichment is in place through visits and events, and these opportunities can always be extended further. Other World religions such as Islam and Judaism are studied discretely, and the pupils appreciate learning about others' beliefs. They come to recognise that there are many similarities and positive differences between differing belief systems.
- The impact of assessment and curriculum is good across the year groups and work is being done to improve the progression of tasks to meet more effectively pupils' learning needs, and mapping learning objectives to enhance progress and evaluate impact. The new system will enable the progress and attainment of different groups to be highlighted and to inform individual learning plans. Governors are aware of a planned development of the RE curriculum, and the need to map and link RE to PSHE, other subjects, and the Floor Books.
- Leaders and governors take into account the views of parents and pupils in evaluating RE though not always formally, and the impact and usefulness of parent conferencing could be more usefully analysed. However, parents are very positive in their feedback about the school and could become even more involved in decision making and partnership.

The Prayer Life of the School

Grade 2

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

- Every pupil regardless of faith background feels welcome to participate fully in the school's prayer life and collective worship. The pupils show great reverence at prayer and a keen willingness to play a part in assemblies and whole school celebrations. Their demeanour, body language, and attentiveness at prayer are outstanding, and observers coming into a class room meditation speak of the remarkable quality of the silence. The Sanctuary room is in constant use as a prayerful, spiritual space for many of the pupils.
- There are occasions when the chaplaincy team plan and present whole school collective worship and they are very keen to be invited to do more. The issue of more pupil involvement is in the school development plan, and already being actively addressed by the school to give pupils more autonomy and to encourage initiative. Planning sheets to guide the pupils in their worship preparation, to include reviews and evaluations of their efforts and suggested improvements, would be perhaps a helpful strategy.
- The prayer life of the school contributes significantly to the spiritual and moral development of the children. As pupils move through the school there is a corresponding progression in prayer, including the traditional Catholic prayers, and an understanding of the structure of the Mass as well as the liturgical year. Pupils also study the lives of their classroom patron saints who are linked to Italian cities such as Rome, Ravenna, and Assisi.
- The prayer areas in each class are a reflective focus for daily prayer and samples of the pupils' own prayers. They are prominent and well monitored by the chaplains themselves. The Floor Books are an excellent expression of their deepening understanding of the topics they cover, and evidence of their response to the values which the school promotes.
- The parish priest is a frequent and inspirational presence to the whole school community. The school is working intently to embed strong, fruitful prayer links and activities between the parish and its two school. The church is some distance from St. Catherine's and is inevitably not the ideal resource for the pupils, nor a convenient alternative venue for their special assemblies and liturgies.

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

- The provision for the prayer life of the school is fully inclusive and makes a good contribution to the spiritual life of the whole school community. This is evident not only in the Masses and assemblies reflecting and linking the

Church's liturgical year, but also the school's whole environment, with appropriate statues and colourful displays. The Sanctuary Room and the Ruby Garden are excellent areas and encouragement to prayer, no little thanks to the enthusiasm and efforts of the chaplaincy team.

- An outstanding feature of prayer life has been the successful introduction of meditation and the Examen, which have elicited a very positive response from the children. They feel their faith is important to them and really appreciate times of reflection and retreat. The school is skilling its pupils well in planning and leading worship, and now focussing on the -evaluation of the impact of their presentations.
- The centrality of prayer life reaches out to all pupils, regardless of faith or family background, and includes both staff and parents. Significant moments, such as Harvest, Remembrance Day, Advent and Lent, and traditional Catholic practices, are celebrated as a whole community and are well supported by parents and parish. Methods and styles of prayer are appropriate, age related and tailored to the pupils, with enthusiastic singing and involvement.

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

- Leaders and governors sustain and nurture the prayer life of the school community well and ensure provision and opportunities for prayer and collective worship are in place. There is evidence of ongoing planning appraisal, and review in documentation such as the governors' minutes, and in the school improvement plans. The new RE link governor is making a very positive impact on developing further the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of provision for prayer life and RE and promoting pupil leadership of prayer and worship.
- The professional development of leaders and staff incorporates liturgical formation and training in planning collective worship through training days and inspirational guest speakers. Governors support through example and being frequently present and taking part in the school prayer life, but also through diocesan training and Ethos days.
- Prayer and collective worship have a high priority in the school's planning, and the school is moving towards a sharper, more detailed self-evaluation broken down with sufficient detail and steps towards improvement.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 37 parental questionnaires received. All were positive about the school and their children's education. Some typical responses included:

'The school provides opportunities for all pupils to take part in class assemblies reflecting on Jesus and His teachings. All the staff work amazingly to promote Catholic values through all subjects especially RE.'

'It is a small school meaning that the children are known by name by members of staff. It has an intimate feel to it. Every child is known by name.'

'Very little links with parish. First Holy Communion as an example is entirely church led.'

'Religion is placed as a main focus of the school. It has very close links to the local Catholic church.'

'The school is incredibly welcoming. It is clear that every child is valued and respected. The school strives to get the best out of each pupil. It is like one big family.'

'St. Catherine's is a fantastic school which provides spiritual guidance at all levels. Welcoming and friendly and teaches good values and attitudes.'

'Each child is valued for more than their academic abilities.'

'What is distinctive about this school for one is empathy. Juggling between jobs and the school.... the school empathises if I have to pick up my child earlier, without being chastised. She has shown so much confidence and willingness to read and more interest in our Lord Jesus. We are blessed. God bless this school.'

'The feel of this school is special, and this is down to the values the children are taught.... It has a 'family feel' and all children are known and valued.'