



INSPECTION REPORT

St. Catharine's Catholic Primary School
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Headteacher: Mrs Joanne Welch
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**Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

Date of inspection: 16-17th January 2020
Date of previous inspection: December 2014

Reporting Inspector: Mr J Skivington
Additional Inspector: Mr Frank Toner

Description of school

St Catharine's is a smaller than average Catholic primary school with 120 pupils on roll. It welcomes pupils from Chipping Campden, the surrounding villages, and the town of Shipston - on Stour. It serves the parishes of St. Catharine's, Chipping Campden and Our Lady's and St. Kenelm in Stow-on-the-Wold. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups, and pupils with English as an Additional language (EAL), are both well below average. There are 13% of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and two pupils have Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP). Nine children receive the pupil premium. The school is celebrating its 150 years anniversary.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 1

This is an outstanding school because:

- The outcomes, the provision, and the leadership and management of Catholic life are all outstanding. The pupils' care and respect for each other and their remarkable involvement and ownership in all aspects of school life make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic ethos of the school and would serve as an exemplar for others.
- The outcomes and the provision of religious education (RE) are both good. The inspirational and transformational leadership and management of RE are outstanding. The quality of teaching is good with much outstanding practice and is closely linked to pupils' achievement and progress. The leadership and management of RE in monitoring and planning for improvement has been and continues to be highly effective.
- The provision for the prayer life of the school and the pupils' wholehearted response and contribution are outstanding. The effectiveness of the leadership and management in monitoring and evaluating the provision for the prayer life of the school is likewise outstanding.

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

- The outstanding leadership of the head teacher, together with an impressively experienced governing body, has very successfully carried the school through a troubled period since the last inspection, and raised the school's profile and performance to an even higher level than before. More importantly, rigorous systems of monitoring and self-evaluation have been embedded over the last two years by a watchful and closely involved governing body, so that continued future improvements are not reliant on any one person or persons.

- The areas for development highlighted in the previous inspection –a more effective chaplaincy across the school; more planned opportunities to enable pupils to articulate their personal response to deeper questions; increased retreat opportunities; and more frequent uptake by foundation governors of diocesan training - have all been transformed into real strengths and exemplars of best practice. There is a stable teaching staff who are highly committed to the mission of the school, and who have successfully undertaken, with enthusiasm and determination, all the relevant training and courses to improve their RE subject knowledge as well as benefitting from regular Inset days on Catholic life and Liturgical training. Staff morale is high. Parental approval, appreciation, and support for the school is unanimous.

What the school should do to improve further

- To bring all teaching up to the level of the existing outstanding practice, and to encourage pupils even further to reflect, evaluate, and debate their learning.
- To develop the Attainment Targets (AT3) in RE throughout the school in order to encourage and enhance pupils' independent learning skills.

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

- Pupils play a significant role in the Catholic life of the school, as expressed in the school's mission statement: 'Let Your Light Shine'. They have contributed to its development, they can articulate what it means, and they clearly live out the values underpinning the mission of the school in their daily lives.
- The pupils are regularly given the opportunity through surveys to express their opinions and evaluate the quality of Catholic life, and this leads directly to improvements and new initiatives. There is a remarkable level of pupil leadership and whole school involvement in all areas of school life through, for instance, the Leaders in Faith project in which almost all the older pupils have achieved the Gold standard.
- The pupils' outstanding behaviour, conduct and attitudes around the school reflect its Catholic character. Their obvious care for one another, particularly the older pupils for the younger children, is an embedded behaviour and reflects the values inculcated by the school. They willingly choose and assume roles of responsibility and through this have a growing understanding of vocation.
- They take on positions of responsibility and leadership of Catholic life, and in the local community, through Chaplaincy and the Ministries of the School Parliament. These include separate groups of pupils who are Ministers of the Environment, Ministers of the Arts (closely involved in initiating and planning Liturgies and assemblies), Ministers of Charities, Sport, and so forth. The Christmas concert, for instance, was completely the work of the pupils, from the choice of readings and carols, to writing and rehearsing a play, and producing a colourful, attractive programme. Led by chaplaincy, the whole school has adopted the Laudato Si project and caring for our common home, eg. reducing plastics and paper. The school has just achieved the CAFOD 'Living Simply' Award which was presented by CAFOD representatives during this inspection.
- The impulse for all these activities stems from a redesigned curriculum so that the school values based on Catholic Social teaching permeates all subject areas. The pupils live out the mission through their outreach to others in the community such as singing and reading at a local residential care home and participating in town celebrations such as the procession with a cross to the top of nearby Dovers Hill. All of these activities are planned in a systematic way and follow the pattern of Meeting, Planning, Action and Evaluation. There is ample evidence of impact and improvement as a result. Their sense of justice is evident, for example, in an exchange of letters with Cadbury's World regarding Free

Trade issues, where the company tried to fob off their concerns with a £2 chocolate voucher - which was met with a strongly worded letter of indignation.

- The chaplaincy team meets regularly, and increasingly take the lead in the daily prayer life of the school, both in Masses, class liturgies and assemblies. They are proactive and keep their own meeting and planning records, in order to improve the impact on their listeners. They monitor displays around the school as well as the prayer focus in each classroom. They send cards to each teacher stipulating change of liturgical colour, and what the prayer focus for the new liturgical season is to be. For example, the year 5/6 focus for Advent was 'Magnificat'.
- A remarkable aspect to pupils' contribution to Catholic Life is the attention to detail, a strong sense of vocation prompting action, and the close working with the governors in every area. There are examples of written correspondence from the pupils seeking advice and help in projects such as the prayer garden and outside space, and the positive practical support and affirmation given by the chair of governors.
- Pupils experience retreats such as the annual Yr. 6 ecumenical pilgrimage and the Yr. 3/4 Ernest Wilsons Garden retreat day. There are other enrichment opportunities and involvement with the other pupils in the Catholic schools' partnership, including events at the cathedral in Clifton.
- Pupils are happy, well- rounded individuals and well prepared for the next stage of their physical, emotional, and spiritual development. The Education in Personal Relationships (RSE) programme, currently being updated, prepares them well for this. The older pupils are interested in, and able to debate, ethical questions with passion, fluency, and conviction, and have developed a holistic approach to their learning.

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 is very evident in the environment and the colourful displays around the school. The school's mission statement 'Let Your Light Shine' is built into every area and activity across the curriculum. The school values, based on Catholic Social Teaching, permeate the curriculum design; for instance, in the choice of texts used in English, or the sense of wonder, space and symmetry in Maths and the calculation of true values, or the pupil initiatives and projects highlighting the dignity of the human person, and the care for our common home. Large scale pieces of art are displayed around the school reflecting school values such as Dignity of Work and Solidarity. Everyone feels responsible for the evaluation of the mission statement and the impact it has across the school.

- St. Catharine's is a welcoming and inclusive community where all are valued and invited to participate. 'There are no outsiders in this school' is a message prominently displayed. As a result, all have a strong sense of belonging to a community that celebrates difference and diversity.
- Very effective pastoral support and care is given to all and this is a real strength. This is effectively modelled by the head teacher and governors, who nurture the spiritual and prayer life of the school. 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 Relationships and Sex Education programme, based on Journey in Love is covered in a themed week in the summer term, as well as PSHE lessons throughout the year. The school provides many opportunities for the pupil's spiritual and moral development right across the curriculum.
- Improved provision and new ideas are well supported by the school's fruitful links with the local Catholic Schools partnership.

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 model this to the whole community. They bring expertise, vision, and challenge which has transformed the school into a beacon of excellent practice. They are knowledgeable and closely involved in the school. The links with the parish continue to strengthen and the parish priest is a supportive presence in the celebration of the Mass and the sacramental life of the school.
- 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. A fruitful Inset in June '19, for example, focussed on School Vision and Curriculum Design based on Catholic Social teaching.
- The governors monitor the quality of Catholic life systematically and have created a climate of responsibility, and constant striving to improve through ongoing evaluation. They are a frequent presence in the school and attend assemblies and liturgies both formally and informally. Their evaluation of Catholic life, in terms of the quality and range of opportunities for pupils' and staffs' spiritual and moral development, and their understanding of it, is systematic, rigorous, and evidenced in reports and feedback to staff and pupils.
- Leaders and governors are well thought of by the parents in their response to questionnaires, and Governor Voice in the school newsletter keeps parents informed of the impact of their work. The school is able to engage very

effectively with parents through family support work led by the Inclusion lead teacher.

- Governors are aware of the Pastoral Vision for the Diocese –Future full of Hope- and all governors attend diocesan training and updates. They are open to advice and collaboration with the other Catholic schools in the Partnership.

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. They make an excellent start in the early years thanks to very 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 achievement, with some inconsistencies linked to weaker teaching. The generally good progress continues in the later years, so that by the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils have achieved the expected level of progress, with some making significantly better than expected progress.
- 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. Sometimes less able children are not always able to meet the challenging goals set and need extra support with tasks more tailored to their learning needs and abilities.
- There are some impressive examples of reflective writing in different styles both in the class books but also in the well-presented Floor Books. In an outstanding Year 5/6 lesson, pupils had a remarkably mature whole class debate on the relative importance of Mary and Joseph in the early life of Jesus, using religious terms with understanding and demonstrating a sound knowledge of scripture. Even the shyer pupils contributed and the whole impassioned debate was skilfully orchestrated in the background by the teacher. This was an outstanding and fruitful example of independent thinking and group work.
- Where the progress of learning is sometimes slower it is often because the learning tasks are not sufficiently differentiated, particularly for the less able, or the pupils become passive learners rather than independent and questioning self-learners being stretched to their full potential. However, the extent of pupils' religious literacy develops well as they go through the school, and in discussion they show a good grasp of key concepts. Behaviour for learning is excellent.
- Learning both about religion, and from religion, are strong features of RE lessons, and the school is now focussing more on attainment targets which will encourage a deepening understanding of religious concepts so that they develop further as self-learners and independent thinkers, making discrete links with their own lives and experiences, and the messages from the Scriptures.
- Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and learn independently, in pairs, and in groups. Their presentation of work is good, and they generally produce a good range and

quantity of writing and show evidence of progress over time. They enjoy learning about other faiths and points of view.

- The school's track record in assessment has been effective and teachers plan closely with the teaching assistants to support weaker learners. The pupils are able to track their progress on a module sheet in their class books, but also through the helpful and challenging marking of the teachers which has a clear impact on progress over time.

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 much that was outstanding, but also some teaching that required improvement. Leadership is fully aware of where teaching needs more intensive support and is providing this specifically. 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 an excellent rapport with the pupils and have high expectations of effort. Questioning is strong 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 are in the main confident in their subject expertise and understand how children learn best.
- The marking policy is well embedded and successful in directing pupils' learning, especially in the challenging quality of the teachers' comments and the pupils' responses, which improves their understanding of what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers are fully committed to their RE teaching and are able to access appropriate CPD training. For instance, the Inclusion lead teacher has completed the Inclusion unit of CCRS, and the other teachers have attended the Cross-Phase Modular Course.

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 is outstanding and the very effective driver of improvement. Leaders and governors monitor and track RE through lesson observations and book scrutiny, and the systems are firmly in place. All evaluations and any recommendations for improvement are clearly evidenced in writing, checked, and seen to be making a difference. Governance is robust and rigorous in employing the

systems of monitoring, and these provide a succinct evaluation of impact upon learning outcomes.

- The RE subject leadership role is carried out by the head teacher, and the link governor for RE is a very experienced retired RE lead teacher. They are excellent supportive role models for the teachers in developing their subject knowledge and classroom practice. They ensure teachers have positive support provided through diocesan training and collaboration with the other teachers in the Catholic partnership. There is in place an annual calendar of monitoring, and RE is a standing item on the Teaching and Learning committee, who feed into the full Governing Body.
- The RE curriculum meets the Bishops' Conference requirements, as well as any additional requirements of the diocesan Bishop. The curriculum has coherence and progression through the years and incorporates the Catholic value across all subjects. The new diocesan system is having a positive and challenging impact and is steadily being adopted. Extracurricular enrichment is in place through visits and visitors, such as retreats and visits to other places of worship, as well as visits from the Imam from Gloucester Mosque, a choreographer, a member of the Baptist church, townsfolk and others in order to optimise pupils' learning further.
- Leaders and governors take into account the views of parents and pupils in evaluating RE through questionnaires and conferencing. Parents are very positive in their feedback to the school and have become even more involved in decision making and partnership through the re energised Friends of St. Catharine group. The parent response to the inspection parental questionnaire was an indication of their approval, gratitude and close interest in what the governors and leadership are providing for their children.

The Prayer Life of the School

Grade 1

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 willingness to play a part in assemblies and whole school celebrations. Their demeanour, participation, and attentiveness at prayer are outstanding. All pupils had met the objectives of Gold 'Leaders in Faith' by the time they moved on to secondary school in summer 2019.
- The assemblies observed during the inspection were planned and led by the chaplaincy and older pupils, with enthusiastic singing, but also pause for reflection and response. The representatives from CAFOD came to the school to present the Live Simply Award and expressed their admiration for the pupils' efforts. 'The visit... has left us feeling inspired, humbled, and with a great hope for the future as a result of what we saw here, heard and experienced with everyone we met at your school. The whole school community is to be congratulated, for it is clear that the essence of Live Simply is ingrained in pupils, staff, governors and friends to the extent that ideas, collaboration, planning and implementation flow naturally'.
- Most pupils regularly prepare and lead worship with confidence and a degree of independence according to their age, through leading class and school liturgies such as Stations of the Cross, Mary and May procession, Pentecost, Forgiveness, etc .Other voluntary acts of worship include Pop-Up chapels during Advent and Lent, or leading the daily Morning prayer with the parents in the playground before lessons. By summer 2019, with the most experienced chaplains, the school community was able to benefit from a Gospel Assembly without any adult involvement in either planning or delivery.
- There are useful planning sheets to guide the pupils in their worship preparation, and these include reviews and evaluations of their efforts and suggested improvement. This 'even better if' self-evaluation has proved an excellent strategy for improvement.
- 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.
- The prayer areas in each class are an attractive, reflective focus for daily prayer and have examples of the pupils' own prayers and poems, including the very insightful reflections in the Floor Class books.

- The parish priest is a frequent presence to the whole school community, and there are strengthening links between parish and school. The adjoining church is an ideal resource for the pupils and an ideal 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 makes an outstanding contribution to the spiritual life of the whole school community, and part and parcel of every school day. Each day begins with prayer in the playground, the Chaplaincy providing parents with prayer cards. An area for an outside prayer gardens has been created with enthusiasm and the involvement of Chaplaincy and the School Ministers.
- All teachers have been trained in helping pupils to plan and deliver quality worship. They have a good understanding of the purpose of prayer and a wide variety of methods and styles of prayer. The school is planning to re-introduce a more regular use of Taizé music to the wider school.

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 are planned procedures to monitor, evaluate, and further enrich prayer life, with written evidence of systematic appraisal, review and evaluation in documentation such as the governors' minutes, or school improvement plans.
- The spirituality of the staff is well supported through days of training and reflection. They are also supported in planning for worship and so becoming more knowledgeable about the liturgical rhythm of the Church, and more confident in modelling high quality inspirational presentations.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires.

There were 48 parental questionnaires received. All were overwhelmingly positive about the school and their children's education. Some typical responses included:

'We moved our children to this school based on its strong academic performance and this is combined with a strong sense of community'.

'...a very caring school where everybody is made to feel welcome while also providing a high standard of education'.

'My children...have always felt part of a school family where they are encouraged and supported both academically and 'personally' by both staff and other children. It is a very supportive environment and they have thrived in this atmosphere'.

'A nurturing, kind, family environment which sits alongside a great education which is offered, creating opportunity for children whilst offering amazing support at the same time'.

'...everyone is made to feel welcome and valued at the school'.

' I think there is a great positive 'community within the school', involving children, teachers, and parents'.