



INSPECTION REPORT

ST LOUIS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Welshmill Lane, Frome
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DfE Number: 9333371
URN: 123844

Headteacher: Mrs H Biles-Wood
Chair of Governors: Mr B Reynolds

**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: 25th and 26th November 2021
Date of previous inspection: 9th and 10th March 2017

Reporting Inspector: Mrs B McLaughlin
Additional Inspector: Mrs A Barrett

Description of school

St Louis is a smaller than average, one-form entry primary school in Frome. It is the only primary school in the town, which has a first school model. The school serves the parish of St Catharine of Alexandria.

There are 181 children at the school. 55% of children are Catholic. In recent years there has been a decrease in the number of Catholic children attending the school. The vast majority of other children at the school are from other Christian denominations or of no faith.

The proportion of children with Special Educational Needs is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average and those speaking English as an additional language is just above the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium is well below the national average.

Since the last denominational inspection there have been several changes in leadership at the school, both in terms of headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body. The interim headteacher took up post in September 2021. Although not of the Catholic faith she has experience both of working in a Catholic school and of leadership in a church school. Her interim appointment for two years has been approved by the Diocese.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 3

This school requires improvement:

- St Louis is a happy and inclusive school with positive relationships amongst staff and pupils
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They are supportive of each other and show kindness.
- Pupils are co-operative and express a desire to have greater ownership of the faith life of the school.
- Links with the parish are good.
- The new headteacher and the Chair of Governors are united in their commitment to strengthening St Louis as a Catholic school and have a good understanding of the current position of the school.
- Improvements have been secured in the teaching of religious education, particularly in terms of consistency of approach and assessment.

However

- Leaders have not addressed all issues from the previous denominational inspection

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- Although steps are being taken to introduce a more systematic and rigorous approach to self-evaluation and school improvement planning, plans are in their early stages and have not yet had time to impact.
 - Current leadership structures are temporary with no permanent members of SLT and several unfilled governor posts.

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

- Following a period of instability and some turbulence in terms of leadership and governance, there is now a new sense of optimism for the future and a willingness to move forward.
- The new headteacher, who has significant experience of leadership in a faith school, has a clear and ambitious vision for the school.
- The new Chair of Governors and reinvigorated Governing Body are focused on providing challenge and support to move the school forward.
- The staff of the school are committed and willing.
- Systems to support tracking, planning and evaluation are being planned and introduced.
- Engagement with the diocese and partner schools is strong.

What the school should do to improve further:

- Leaders and governors to implement rigorous systems for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting the Catholic Life and prayer life of the school.
- Develop staff confidence and skills in promoting both the Catholic Life and prayer life of the school, so that staff can confidently empower pupils to take a more active and independent part in these areas of school life.
- Develop the teaching of religious education to include independent, creative, and collaborative learning.

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

- Pupils value and appreciate the Catholic life of the school and its mission “to love, wonder and achieve together.” They show an understanding of the values of the school, recognising in particular the need for kindness and respect for others.
- Pupils understand the link between faith and daily life but often struggle to discuss this more deeply. They value the newly introduced opportunity to ask “Big Questions” of the parish priest and to explore their faith further through these. Older pupils in particular would welcome the opportunity to discuss and debate more frequently, developing their own understanding and confidence in expressing themselves.
- Pupils welcome the opportunity to participate in activities that are made available to them. They respond positively to invitations and requests from staff and speak enthusiastically of their support of local charities such as Frome Foodbank as well as CAFOD and Children in Need. Opportunities for pupils to initiate and lead activities are currently still limited.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They display care and consideration to each other. Pupils work co-operatively with staff and express a desire to take on greater leadership roles across the school. They speak fondly of Family Groups and the School Council, which they would like to see reintroduced.
- Pupils have a growing understanding of *Catholic Social Teaching*, particularly in terms of the *Common Good* and *Care for Creation*, which have been a focus at the school. One outcome of this has been the recycling of food waste at break time, which has been introduced by Year 5.
- Year 6 pupils engage in chaplaincy activities, as directed by staff. They proudly wear their diocesan chaplaincy leader badges and speak enthusiastically of joint activities undertaken with a partner school. Many of them are confident and capable of developing and leading chaplaincy activities with other year groups but do not currently do so. Pupils in other year groups see chaplaincy as something that is done in Year 6.
- Pupils respond extremely well to the personal care and support offered to them by teaching and support staff alike. They feel happy and safe.

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

- The Mission Statement of the school is a clear expression of the purpose and values of the school. It has been reviewed by the whole school community and is being used as a vehicle to deepen pupil understanding of Catholic life and also to make more explicit the school’s identity as a Catholic school.

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- The recent introduction of a regular focus on a Gospel value and the weekly Gospel Value Star Awards has raised the profile of values across the school and is also enabling pupils to better understand the links between faith and life. This is further enhanced by some staff who are making regular, overt links to this in their interactions with pupils.
 - Staff are committed to participating in and strengthening the faith life of the school but would benefit from experiencing a wider range of activities which enable them to grow in knowledge and confidence in leading this key part of school life.
 - Staff promote good standards of behaviour, and they are positive role models of mutual respect and care for pupils.
 - The school environment clearly reflects its Catholic identity in displays around the school. All classrooms have a focal prayer area which reflects the themes of the term in both RE and the liturgical year. The recently refurbished chapel provides a quiet, reflective space for pupils and staff and the planned outdoor prayer space is a source of great excitement for pupils.
 - Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), and Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) are planned to reflect Catholic teachings and principles. The schemes that have been purchased to deliver these are in line with diocesan and Department for Education (DfE) guidance and are shared with parents and carers on the school website.
 - The school's website gives a high profile to the Catholic Life of the school and includes all appropriate policies, which have been recently reviewed.

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

- Leaders and governors are committed to promoting and strengthening the provision for the Catholic life of the school. This has now been included as a priority area on the School Development Plan and a schedule of regular scrutiny and reporting has been devised.
- New leaders have a good understanding of the requirements and possibilities available to the school and are beginning to plan in a more focused and outward-looking way.
- To date the school's self-evaluation has not systematically or rigorously included the Catholic life of school and reporting to the Governing Body has not taken place. Leaders are now beginning to implement this.
- Although committed and supportive, the Governing Body has not had systems to review and monitor the Catholic life of the school in terms of the quality and impact on pupils and staff. Governor records have not reflected this area of school life. A new schedule has been devised and is being implemented. Staff

training and development on the Catholic life of the school have been limited with insufficient INSET days devoted to it.

- Leaders have developed improvement plans for chaplaincy and PSHE, but these are not yet linked to self-evaluation, the whole school development plan or reports to governors.
- The school has strategies for engaging with parents. These include a new weekly newsletter and the school website, which has been recently updated and refreshed. These make explicit the Catholic ethos of the school and also share information with parents about the liturgical calendar and events in school. The school has been less successful in getting feedback from parents with a recent chaplaincy questionnaire having no responses.
- The school responds well to diocesan policies, initiatives, and training. Engagement with the Emmaus Partnership has been positive and is becoming increasingly focused.

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

- Overall, most pupils, from their varied starting points, make good progress in each key stage, with no significant variation between groups of pupils. From Reception through to the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2), clear progression and development are demonstrated through the work in pupils' books and in discussions with them.
- Most pupils use religious vocabulary well. This is reinforced in each classroom through relevant and topical displays which staff use to support and reinforce learning. Older pupils would benefit from developing their thoughts further through opportunities for debate and discussion.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. They engage willingly and positively, as directed by staff. They enjoy RE but would welcome the opportunity for a greater range of independent learning activities and group work.
- The current work of pupils is extremely well presented. Most pupils take pride in their exercise books and can discuss what they have been doing. They can identify work they are particularly proud of, such as their study of St Maximilian Kolbe and the Sacrament of Ordination and they can explain why they are pleased with it.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the school assessment system. They understand and respond to teacher feedback and thus make progress in their learning.

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

- There has been improvement in the quality and consistency of teaching since the last inspection. The introduction of the "Come and See" scheme, alongside supplementary diocesan resources, provides teachers with a framework against which to plan and resource lessons. As a result of this teachers have a better understanding of progression within the religious education curriculum.
- Teachers communicate high expectations about RE and learning. They create a positive and respectful environment for learning, encouraging and celebrating pupils' achievements.
- Teachers and support staff are effective in using focused classroom displays to support learning. These reinforce key vocabulary and concepts. The introduction of knowledge organisers, with key vocabulary and linked Scripture passages, has the potential to further support learners.
- Teachers use a variety of resources to enhance learning such as Scripture, music and film. Activities are however usually teacher led and provide limited scope for encouraging pupil creativity or independent learning.

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- Teacher questioning is often good. In the best examples teachers do not just accept the first answer given but push the pupil to provide more detailed information to demonstrate their understanding; as seen during the inspection in a lesson on prophets, where pupils made links between their previous learning about Isaiah and the season of Advent.
 - Teachers are aware of the different needs of pupils in their class, and together with a team of committed teaching assistants, they provide support to individual learners. Less able pupils would however benefit from more differentiated tasks to ensure that they fully understand and can make links in their learning. More able pupils, in particular, are ready to take on more open-ended tasks, such as research-based activities, to improve their learning and become more confident independent learners.
 - Teachers provide pupils with regular, constructive feedback, in line with the school policy which covers all curriculum subjects. Teachers track learners' progress using learning ladders which assess each learner against the expectations for each unit of work. Pupils contribute to these learning ladders, thus gaining a better understanding of what they need to do to improve.
 - During the period of school closure and remote learning, due to the Covid pandemic, teachers provided pupils with a range of learning activities and tracked the progress of those who engaged with this provision.

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

- Leaders and governors ensure that the RE curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and that the required amount of curriculum time is given to RE. As a result of this the quality of work produced in religious education has parity with other subjects.
- Expenditure on resources for learning in RE does not, however have parity with other core subjects and although staff meeting time is often given to discussing the teaching of RE, an appropriate amount of INSET time has not been given to the subject.
- The RE Lead keeps abreast of all diocesan developments and undertakes training associated with the teaching of RE. She offers regular support and guidance to staff, who value her input.
- The RE Lead has developed a system for monitoring delivery of religious education. This involves work scrutiny, lesson observations and the tracking of pupil progress. However, the findings have not systematically been reported to governors or been used to influence the school development plan.
- The current school development plan makes reference to improvements in RE but lacks clarity in distinguishing between curriculum RE, the Catholic Life and Prayer Life of the school. A clear distinction between these three areas would

enable leaders and governors to be precise in the monitoring and evaluation they are beginning to undertake.

- The link governor for RE has a good understanding of the monitoring and accountability required in relation to the provision and impact of RE teaching. He has been instrumental in introducing formal systems of accountability which are beginning to be evidenced in the minutes of meetings of the Governing Body.

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

- Pupils show reverence and respect during prayer and participate willingly. They are enthusiastic in saying the school prayer, which older pupils were involved in writing.
- Pupils enjoy praying and understand its importance. They are familiar with traditional Catholic prayers and the use of Scripture in prayer but have limited opportunities for spontaneous prayer or using a variety of prayer styles.
- Pupils in each class take turns to plan weekly class worship, which they share with their peers. They take this responsibility seriously and use the planning framework provided by staff. However, they do not have the flexibility to move beyond this framework and many would welcome the opportunity to be more creative.
- Pupils respond positively to requests to be involved in prayer and worship but see this as something they are asked to do rather than something they own and initiate. Teachers should build on pupils' willingness and ability to take on leadership responsibilities in the prayer life of the school.
- A designated area in each class has a focal point for prayer as well as some examples of the pupils' own prayers in the Class Prayer book. Although all pupils recognise that there is an area in the classroom, they were not consistently clear about its purpose; some calling it a prayer table while others saw it as an RE table. These designated areas are not yet being consistently used as a focal point for prayer and worship.
- Pupils are not actively involved in determining or evaluating prayer and worship in the school but feel this is something they could do, and indeed want to do. They are excited about the new chapel and the creation of an outdoor prayer area which they are helping to plan with the headteacher.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the liturgical year, which is consistently referenced across the school. This is reflected in classroom and whole school displays. Pupils have contributed to some of the displays, but the majority of pupils see these as something prepared by the adults in the school.
- Pupils speak positively about the prayer bags that a different pupil in each class takes home each week. They enjoyed sharing with inspectors the prayers they had written with their families. Pupils and families have not been involved in the evaluation of the contents and impact of these prayer bags.

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

- Prayer is a key feature of daily life at the school and included in all school gatherings and celebrations. Staff have a consistent approach which is evident

across the school, with some adaptations made for the age and aptitude of pupils.

- Leaders encourage consistent expectations relating to the format and participation in collective prayer. Most collective worship starts with a candle being lit and the Sign of the Cross.
- Prayer and worship reflect the liturgical calendar and the values of the school, as evident on the focus on compassion and Advent during the inspection. Vibrant displays around the school reinforce these themes as well as highlighting Holy Days celebrated by the Church. Pupils understand this but could not identify any opportunities they have for prayer as a response to topical things happening in the world.
- Staff model traditional ways of praying to pupils and there is a consistent approach across the school. Many acts of collective worship delivered in individual classes and at whole school level follow a question-and-answer approach more typically seen in RE lessons. Teachers would benefit from observing and experiencing a variety of approaches to prayer to widen their own experience and confidence in planning and leading prayer.
- Staff support pupils to create opportunities for prayer with the aid of planning grids and passages from the Bible. Although pupils are familiar and comfortable with the format and adhere to it, they experience a limited range of prayer and worship.
- The headteacher is seeking to widen the range of prayer opportunities for pupils and has introduced a prayer station, where pupils can spontaneously write a prayer. Its introduction has been noted by pupils but many of them lack the confidence to engage with it, unless prompted to do so.
- Links with the parish are strong and the parish priest provides high quality, valued support to the school.

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

- Leaders and governors understand the importance and centrality of the prayer life of the school and ensure regular opportunities for prayer and collective worship are in place. Systems for strategic planning, monitoring and the evaluation of the prayer life of the school are not yet in place. However, leaders and governors understand the importance of these and are taking positive steps to address this.
- Leaders and teachers are committed to being positive role models and developing the range of opportunities and approaches to prayer across the school. Staff are willing and supportive but are currently constrained by a limited repertoire of approaches. They would benefit from additional training and from observing a range of outstanding practice. As the knowledge and

confidence of staff increases, so pupils will be empowered to take a lead in the prayer life of the school.

- Parents are kept informed through the weekly school newsletter which includes a weekly prayer reflection, linked to a school Gospel value or Bible passage.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 14 parental questionnaires received. They were all positive in their praise of the school and their children's education. Some typical responses included:

"There is a happy community feel with a Catholic ethos."

"Children feel comfortable and happy"

"There is a real warmth to the school, it feels safe and nurturing."

"Religion and education are complimentary, supportive and harmonious."

"There are high standards and good morals."

"The school provides sound academic knowledge and a robust moral stance."