



INSPECTION REPORT

ST. FRANCIS' ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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D/ES Number: 802/3350

Headteacher: Mr P Stathers

Chair of Governors: Mr S Jennings

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: 28 February and 1 March 2006

Date of previous inspection: 10/11 January 2001

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Maisie Foster

Description of the School

St. Francis' Catholic Primary School serves the parishes of St. Francis', Nailsea and the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Clevedon. A high proportion approximately 65% of children, are Catholics and the remainder are practicing or broadly acknowledged Christians. Two Muslim children have recently joined the school. The majority of children are from White British families. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is lower than in most schools, although the proportion with statements is about average. There are a growing number of children who have English as an additional language (EAL). A very small number of pupils are eligible for free school meals.

Recently, the school gained an award as a "Healthy School" and a "Quality Standards" award for information communication technology (ICT). In addition the school has had its "Investor in People" award renewed.

At the time of the inspection the co-ordinator for Religious Education (R.E.) was on long-term sick leave. Responsibility of the subject is being shared between the Headteacher, the Deputy Head and the ICT co-ordinator.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Unsatisfactory

Overall Effectiveness

The school provides a very good Catholic education and leadership and management are very strong. The Catholic ethos is consistently fostered and always evident. Pupils achieve very good standards, and make good progress. Teaching and learning are significant strengths although the school recognises that more needs to be done to develop differentiation and assessment for learning. The Governors' and the headteacher's leadership group have set a clear direction for future improvement. The quality of collective worship is outstanding. Staff contribute strongly to the quality of the Catholic life of the school and this has a very positive impact on pupils' personal development which is further enhanced by the schools commitment to living out Gospel values. Children are good learners and take responsibility through participation in the School Council and the Buddy system. They develop leadership and communication skills.

Parents regard the school very highly and are fully involved in supporting their children's learning and the wider life of the school.

Good links exist with the two parishes and with external agencies which reinforce the good standard of care, guidance and support which the school provides.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

The key issues for action identified in the last inspection have been addressed:

- Provision for moral education is effectively planned and implemented.
- "Here I am" provides structures for planning and assessment which offer teachers appropriate guidance.

Grade 2

The capacity for the school community to improve and develop

The school is well placed to address the issues identified in this inspection and to build on the very good provision outlined in this report. The strength of its leadership and management; the quality of teaching and learning and the strength of the school community give clear evidence of its capacity for self-improvement.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Re-instate classroom observations as soon as practicable as part of school's monitoring procedure.
- Build on the assessment for learning practice which has begun in some classes in order to develop a consistent whole school approach. This should include helping pupils evaluate their own work.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good, with some very good features. The school's Catholic mission is the central focus of its leadership resulting in a strong, unifying ethos, very good standards of achievement and a continuing emphasis on the personal development of learners.

There is a strong sense of Christian community among all the staff who understand, support and contribute to the vision of the school. This shows itself in their ability to interpret the mission statement in all aspects of their work and in providing very good role models. Pupils achieve high standards and develop into very effective learners. The current absence of the R.E. co-ordinator has meant that the systems for monitoring and evaluating the curriculum has not been possible.

The headteacher has identified and celebrated the strengths of the school and the areas for development are recorded in the highly comprehensive Strategic Plan. This helps in that all members of the community understand and work towards common goals.

An unusual and significant feature of the school is its Chaplaincy, involving a Sister of the local Religious Community, the two parish priests and the R.E. link Governor. This additional dimension contributes to the spiritual and moral development of pupils and enriches the pastoral life of the school.

These are good systems supporting Governors' involved in school improvement through regular meetings with the leadership and chaplain teams to discuss R.E. and liturgy issues. The link R.E. Governor reports to the Governing Body on her meetings, schedules for school's improvement and visits to school, so that they are fully informed when making decisions.

THE PRAYER LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

Collective Worship

The quality of collective worship is outstanding. The school has worked hard to develop liturgies, which are well planned, inclusive and creative. The effect of these is to engage pupils at every level in the prayer life of the school. The dimension of celebration is particularly noteworthy: at Mass the children dance, sing, read and listen to the word of God with a remarkable degree of reverence and personal commitment. Prayer is established as central to pupils' lives and appropriate to their stages of development.

Acts of worships, including Assembly, are planned to engage pupils' attention and to develop their ability to reflect, using a wide range of techniques including information and communication technology, music, role-playing and dance. Children take responsibility for planning and doing their own acts of worship and evaluate them with increasing maturity. For example, in a Year 6 class, pupils planned a class assembly using a power-point presentation, chose music, poems, prayers and images. Such work develops their own spirituality and provides a model for other children.

Staff and pupils pray together at every opportunity – using taught prayers of the Church and extemporary prayers of individuals. Parents and parishioners celebrate Mass with the school either in the Church or the school hall, forming one prayer community.

The school prayer book is used daily in all classes alongside prayers composed by the class members, to develop further the school's identity as a prayer community.

Grade 1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards

Most learners achieve very good standards and make rapid progress, including those with special needs. Standards in R.E. are strongly supported by the standards achieved in Literacy, which are above the national average. This enables pupils to progressively express and develop their knowledge and understanding.

Scrutiny of pupils work demonstrates that time in lessons is used productively, appropriate levels of Homework are regularly set and marked and in consequence pupils make good progress.

Pupils interviewed and observed in lessons enjoy R.E. They respond well in lessons, particularly to the most skilful questioning by teachers. They learn to expand their spiritual thinking and to clarify the consequences for their conduct in every life.

Pupils excellent behaviour contributes to their good learning. Spiritual and moral development is promoted by the example of the adults in school and the careful planning of the curriculum by teachers.

Grade 2

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Teaching and Learning in Religious Education

The quality of teaching was very good in the three lessons observed. Teachers' subject knowledge was good, planning was very good and learning objectives were shared with the children. The quality of teachers questioning is a strength of the RE lessons and in one lesson, was exceptional. Teachers employed a wide range of strategies to ensure pupils' understanding, and learning support assistants (LSAs) contributed very effectively to pupils' progress. Resources were imaginatively used to extend pupils' learning.

Differentiation in the work seen was usually by outcome, though in recent work there is evidence of different tasks being set for the less able and sometimes, for the more able.

Marking is regular, positive and, in the best practice, additional teachers' comments encourage and affirm the learners.

Assessment for learning, through the use of developmental marking is not yet much in evidence. It has started and it is planned to extend its use to improve learning.

Pupils are beginning to evaluate their own work and this too is an area identified for continuing development.

Grade 2

QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM PROVISION

How well does R.E. curriculum meet the needs and interests of the learners?

The coverage of “Here I am” is effectively planned and taught in each year group ensuring progression and continuity through the school.

Teachers make very good use of ICT to support learning; for example, one teacher used photographs of their Class’s own special meal contrasted with photos supplied by CAFOD of the Sudan to teach the concept of helping the wider community. The use of drama, role-playing, music, artefacts, photos and poetry enables the interest of the learner to be engaged and sustained so learning is more effective. Interactive and aesthetically pleasing displays of their work help children to focus on prayer and see themselves pictured in a positive way to develop their self-esteem.

One Inset Day for R.E. each academic year ensures that R.E. has the same status as other core subjects. R.E. is also resourced at the same level. R.E. meets the Bishops’ conference requirements in terms of time allocation and resourcing. Accommodation is good and a wealth of good quality resources provide stimulation to learners. Provision is enhanced by the opportunities for quiet and reflective prayer in the Quiet Room, the help and guidance of the chaplaincy and the high regard and support of parents.

Most teachers are well qualified to teach R.E. and three teachers are attending the Diocesan course this year. The school includes and respects the faith background of all students. Other faiths are taught, in line with “Here I am”. The two Muslim children were invited to do a presentation about Islam, with the consent and support of their parents.

Grade 1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership and management in Religious Education

The school is experiencing difficulties caused by the long-term absence of the R.E. co-ordinator. Despite this, the Head teacher, the deputy head teacher and the ICT co-ordinator have worked with dedication and efficiency to keep R.E. in the forefront of the life of the school.

The very good leadership of the head teacher sets an example of what it is to live the mission of the school. This is shared by all other adults of the community. Staff are committed to the purpose of R.E. teaching and this helps to maintain its central focus.

Clear directions are set in the Strategic Plan but currently the school is unable to carry out its planned development of R.E., which includes monitoring through lesson observations and the development of assessment procedures. However, systems are in place to enable the issues for development to be addressed when staffing returns to its normal level.

Grade 2