INSPECTION REPORT

ST. JOHN'S R.C. PRIMARY SCHOOL

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DfES Number: 800/3424

Headteacher: Mr Robert Coleman
Chair of Governors: Mr Peter Daly

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: 9 and 12 June 2006
Date of previous inspection: 17, 19 and 20 July 2000

Reporting Inspector: Mrs A Fowler

Description of School

St. John's is a Catholic primary school serving the parishes of St. John's, Bath, Our Lady and St. Alphege, Ss Peter and Paul and St. Dunstan's. At present the school is a split site school with the Infant Department (Foundation Stage and Key Stage One) situated in Oldfield Park and the Junior Department (Key Stage Two) situated in Pulteney Road. The school is seeking to relocate to one site in the near future. The present Head Teacher was appointed two years ago following a period of instability. Under his leadership the school is committed to raising standards, recognising the uniqueness of the individual and putting Christ at the heart of everything the school does. Parents are supportive of the school and pupils are keen to learn and are very proud of their school. At present there are 280 pupils on roll, approximately three quarters of which come from Catholic families. The school is committed to inclusiveness and has recently appointed an EMAS (Ethnic Minority Achievement Service) coordinator.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St. John's is a good Catholic school. It is serious and honest in its approach to self evaluation and knows itself very well. The Head Teacher is committed to ensuring that the Catholic ethos is at the heart of the school and is made explicit in planning, policies and practice. The mission is shared with and understood by all connected with the school. Spiritual and moral developments are a real strength of the school, pupils' behaviour and attitudes are exemplary, they are very proud of their school, they value the teaching they receive and enjoy their work. Staff are excellent role models. The school (on both sites) provides an attractive and welcoming place for pupils, staff and visitors. The displays and reflection area make the Catholic nature of the school clear, and enhance the spiritual and moral development of all. There is a difference in standards in RE between pupils' written work which is satisfactory and their oral work which is very good. The school is aware of this and has strategies in place to overcome this. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

All the recommendations since the last inspection have been fulfilled.

Grade 2

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The governors, leaders, staff and pupils share a strong sense of purpose and have the confidence of parents. The Head Teacher is committed to the Catholic mission of the school and to raising standards. The school is honest and clear in its self evaluation and has a good capacity to improve further.

Grade 2

What the school should do to improve further

- Focus on assessment for learning in RE
- Ensure that diagnostic marking in RE is used consistently throughout the school and pupils are given opportunities to act on the comments
- If possible reintroduce class Masses

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good. The quality and honesty of the school's self evaluation means that governors and senior managers are confident in their knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are increasingly aware of their role as 'critical friend' and the appointment of a link governor for RE means that accurate information is being presented to the governing body. The Head Teacher has a clear vision of the nature of a Catholic school and this vision is communicated effectively to staff and pupils. New staff, through the induction programme, are made aware of the nature of the school and continuing Inset enables staff to feel confident in contributing to the distinctiveness of the school. The school development plan places the catholicity of the school at the heart of future development. The Mission Statement was renewed under the present Head Teacher with all members of the community contributing to this. The school is committed to inclusion, this is a central goal based on the belief that we are all created in the image of God, and the school was recently awarded the Inclusion Quality Mark from Bath and North East Somerset. Resources are well used and the environment designed to be welcoming, stimulating and prayerful. The work of all pupils is well displayed. Spiritual and Moral development is outstanding with all staff acting as excellent role models. Students feel safe and secure and are intensely loyal to and proud of their school. Leadership at all levels encourages pupils to take responsibility for themselves and others. This is reflected in the many charitable activities that are organised by pupils themselves. Links with parishes, particularly St. John's and St. Alphege's and St. Peter and Paul are good with priests visible in school and the school contributing to and supporting activities (e.g. First Communion Programme) within the parish. The school is committed to raising standards and under the present Head Teacher has begun a programme of monitoring and evaluating through observations, book trawls and discussions. These strategies however are in their early stages and have not yet begun to bring about consistent improvement. Assessment data is beginning to be used to inform planning and hence improve progress but again this needs to be fully embedded in the school.

Grade 2

The Prayer Life of the School

Provision for prayer and worship is good and well integrated into the life of the school. Prayer occurs naturally in the classroom and pupils regularly take ownership of acts of worship. Creative use is made of dance, music and drama. Pupils (even in the foundation stage) know formal prayers and join in enthusiastically and reverently when these are said. Pupils also compose their own prayers and poems, many of which express profound insights into their relationship with God. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their actions and their learning in a prayerful way and this enables them to make strong links between faith and life. This enhances and deepens their spiritual development. Themes chosen for assemblies reflect both the Church's liturgical year and the concerns and hopes of pupils themselves. Prayer corners within classrooms are well kept and stimulating and demonstrate the pupils' contribution. The Eucharist is celebrated on Holy Days and special occasions and pupils contribute to the planning, writing of bidding prayers and become involved in the offertory etc. An area for

development would be the introduction of class Masses which for various reasons do not take place at present. There is a collective worship policy which one of the governors has taken responsibility for evaluating. Parents and the local parish community are regularly invited to join the staff and the pupils for prayer. The very visual reflection area at the entrance to the junior school is designed to appeal to all the senses and creates an atmosphere of prayer and stillness as people enter; this reinforces the view that Christ is at the centre of all the school does.

Grade 2

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Overall standards are satisfactory but there is a dichotomy between oral work and written work. Learners make good often excellent progress in their oral work. They are able to reflect on and express difficult concepts and demonstrate a high degree of understanding. Standards in written work however are below those found in literacy. Oral tasks challenge pupils, stretching their thinking and encouraging them to be reflective and evaluative. Written tasks are not as challenging, pupils need to be encouraged to develop their skills in extended writing and success criteria for written work needs to be more clearly defined. Throughout the school pupils are confident in discussion, ask good questions and respond well to teachers' questions. They move easily into paired or group work, working on task and with maturity. It was impressive to see even foundation stage pupils doing paired work and begin to reflect with each other on the task. Assessment for learning is not yet embedded into the planning and delivery of RE. This is an area of development identified by the school itself and should help raise the standard of written work. Pupils with learning disabilities make good progress due to the school's focus on inclusion. Religious Education makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral and social development of students.

Grade 3

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

All teaching observed during the course of the inspection was good. Lessons are well planned and structured and tasks designed to awaken and maintain pupils' interest and concentration. Questioning is very effective with good use made of open questions. The use of hot seating (in one observed lesson for example a child played Zacchaeus) encouraged reflection and creative interpretation of scripture. Drama activities such as freeze framing encourage learning and cater for visual and kinaesthetic learners. The use of WALT (What are we learning today) means that pupils are aware of the purpose of the lesson. Good use is made of teaching assistants to support the delivery of the lesson. Pupils are well behaved, enjoy their work and like learning. They are encouraged to apply their learning to their own lives. They are not certain how to improve their written work and diagnostic marking is not used consistently throughout the school. This is an area which needs improving and once embedded in practice will enhance learning. The staff know the strengths and abilities of their pupils and in all of the teaching in Key Stage One observed tasks were differentiated so that all students could access the work.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The school uses the 'Here I Am' programme and fulfils all the Bishops' Conference requirements. Resources are generally used well though far more effective use needs to be

made of ICT. Capitation is equivalent to that given to other major subject areas. Staff are helped to deliver good quality RE through the Inset provision the school makes, including sending staff to the Diocesan modular course. As part of its programme for relationship education the school has recently adopted the Diocesan recommended course 'In the Beginning'. The curriculum is designed to be inclusive and contributes to the spiritual and moral social and cultural development of pupils.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

There is good leadership and management in RE. The coordinator has a clear vision for RE which is enthusiastically shared with others. She is well supported by the leadership of the school. There is a clear development plan for RE and a programme of in-service training. Within staff meetings the delivery of the 'Here I Am' topics are discussed and planned. Staff feel supported. The coordinator has begun to monitor and evaluate lessons though there are obvious difficulties caused by the split site nature of the schools. The monitoring and evaluation needs to be continued and developed. Book trawls also contribute to the monitoring of the department. These take place on a regular basis and the inspectors found these to be accurate and informative. The coordinator is an excellent role model and her enthusiasm for the subject contagious. She has developed good links with the parish and diocesan agencies. The Head Teacher also monitors, supports and encourages staff in the delivery of RE. Display work within the department is excellent, designed to enhance learning and promote the ideas of the school. The subject is perceived as a core subject by both staff and pupils.

Grade 2