



INSPECTION REPORT

ST. JOSEPH'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Park Avenue, Bridgwater, TA6 7EE
Telephone: 01278 422786
e-mail address: sch.059@educ.somerset.gov.uk
D/ES Number:

Acting Headteacher: Mr W Kelly
Chair of Governors: Mr K Chamberlain

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: 26/27 January 2006
Date of previous inspection: 16/17 November 1999

Reporting Inspector: Mr Stephen Lake

Description of the school

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School serves the Catholic community of Bridgwater and surrounding villages. It is a large and popular school although the percentage of baptised Catholics has fallen significantly since the time of the last inspection to 38% of the school. The majority of pupils are of White British origin. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is about average. The proportion of pupils leaving and joining the school during their school career is less than average.

The school has been through a turbulent period in its leadership. The previous headteacher fell ill over a year ago and subsequently retired in June 2005. The locum headteacher brought in suffered a period of illness and the school now has an acting headteacher pending the appointment of a substantive head.

Key for inspection grades

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

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners and why?

Overall the school provides a satisfactory Catholic education. The leadership and management team set a good example in Catholic issues which creates a positive Catholic ethos within the school community. Recent changes to the Governing Body have created a group of governors who share the vision of the Acting Head and staff in their commitment to provide good quality Catholic education. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall and their standards in religious education are broadly in line with their standards in literacy. The school acknowledges that more could be done to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Assessment information needs to be used more effectively to support teachers' planning. A good range of resources exist to support teaching and learning and the majority of teachers have a recognised qualification in religious education. The quality of collective worship is satisfactory overall although more opportunities are needed for pupils to join in the celebration of Mass.

Grade [3]

Improvements since the last Inspection

The key issues of the last inspection have all been dealt with satisfactorily.

Grade [2]

The Capacity of School to Improve and Develop

The present acting headteacher has been in post for less than a month but is already building upon the good work done by the previous head. A substantive head has yet to be appointed but, given the hard work and commitment of the staff together with the support provided by the acting head and the governing body the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Grade [2]

What steps need to be taken to improve the provision further?

- Extend the systems already in place for monitoring and evaluation to include regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning and ensure that governors receive regular reports on the outcomes of all monitoring
- Make more effective use of the assessment information available to plan work that meets the needs of all pupils

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

1. How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school?

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the acting headteacher is competent and clearly focussed upon the raising of standards in religious education and improving the opportunities for pupils to develop in their personal and prayer lives. Strengths and weaknesses have been identified and shared with staff. Clear areas for improvement have been set out in the School Action Plan. Procedures for informing and involving governors are under development, but practical strategies for monitoring new systems as they become embedded are not yet in place.

The acting headteachers in place over the last six months have brought a sense of stability to the school and support and leadership to the very dedicated staff. As a result the catholicity of the school has been sustained. However, until very recently it has not been possible to bring about the improvements that many teachers wished to see.

The results of parents' questionnaires show great support for the school over this time.

Grade [3]

Collective Worship

2. How good is the quality of Collective Worship?

Suitable opportunities are given to pupils to engage in prayer and collective worship. Until very recently there were limited opportunities for pupils to contribute and engage in leading worship. Regular assemblies provide at least satisfactory and sometimes good quality occasions when pupils can pray and worship as apart of a community. However, the involvement of pupils in whole school assemblies is an area for development already noted by the school in the action plan. Pupils take part in Masses at important points in the school and liturgical calendar. Good strategies are used to motivate and involve pupils in the Mass such as the use of Eucharistic Prayers for Children, but too few opportunities exist for pupils to regularly take part in Masses. The great distance to the Parish church makes it very difficult for pupils to be taken to the church for Mass. Other liturgies are used to ensure that pupils take part in prayer and worship that involves the whole school community.

Class prayers are a regular feature of school life. Pupils understand that worship is important to people in other communities through their study of the key points of other religions such as Judaism. The school has recently re-introduced the practice of providing all pupils with a prayer book to emphasise the importance of worship. This also has the benefit of providing guidance on the regular and well known prayers of the Church to the many children who do not come from a practising Catholic background.

Parents and governors join pupils in the acts of worship on some occasions helping pupils understand the Church community and see the example set by adults. This is another area identified for improvement by the acting head and RE coordinator. To help develop this area a governor has recently been appointed to liaise between school and parish with a view to strengthening links.

Grade [3]

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and Standards

3. How well do learners achieve?

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The standards attained in religious education are similar to their standards in literacy which shows some variation from year to year. Attainment is broadly in line with that expected although there are some inconsistencies. Pupils in the current Year 5 are achieving better than the pupils in Year 6. The school's assessments supported by inspection observations show

that the achievement of pupils is getting better. Examination of pupils' work and lessons shows that children of all abilities make similar progress in their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities receive good support from Learning Support Assistants to enable them to make the same progress as other pupils.

Most pupils say that they enjoy religious education. They respond well in lessons and make suitable contributions. In the lessons observed pupils behaved well. In the best lessons observed pupils' thoughtful contribution demonstrated a good level of understanding.

The impact of what children are learning is evident in the life of the school. For example the high emphasis on friendship and community can be seen in the way that pupils behave and treat each other. Their spiritual and moral development is good as a result of the consistent way in which development in these areas is promoted through example of adults and teaching in RE lessons.

Grade [3]

Quality of provision for Religious Education

3 How effective are teaching and learning?

Teaching is satisfactory with some areas of strength and some areas for development. As a result pupils are learning satisfactorily. Teachers have good relationships with pupils that keep the pupils interested in what they are learning. Where teaching is good lessons are stimulating and encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers work hard to ensure that all pupils are included in lessons. Teachers mark work regularly but there are too few opportunities taken to show pupils how they can improve their work. Regular assessments are carried out and records kept of what pupils have done. However, the information gathered is not used effectively to plan work that will enable pupils to improve their attainment.

Grade [3]

4 How well does the Religious Education curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?

The school follows the approved Diocesan scheme of work for religious education. Teachers are beginning to make good use of Information and Communication technology to support learning. For example, pupils in Year 6 have made extensive use of the internet to research the life of Mother Teresa. The recommended amount of time is spent studying religious education but not enough thought has been given to considering how this time should be divided

over the term. As a result some lessons are too long for the subject matter being covered and this makes it harder for teachers to sustain the interest of the pupils throughout the whole session.

Grade [3]

Leadership and Management

5 How effective are leadership and management in supporting all learners in Religious Education?

The leadership and management of religious education is satisfactory. The coordinator has a good understanding of her role but this role is not clearly defined by Senior Management at present. The governors have recognised this in reviewing the staffing structure but this has not been put in place yet. Senior managers make regular checks on teachers' planning and on samples of pupils' work, but not enough is done to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms. This gives rise to inconsistencies and limits opportunities to improve learning by making sure that all teachers, including supply teachers, teach in the most effective way. This has been identified in the school action plan for religious education

The accommodation is satisfactory and a wide range of suitable resources are available. Public areas and classrooms contain focus areas for religious education and an impressive amount of the available display space is taken up to display pupils' work in religious education. However, the quality of the focus areas is variable. Some are congested and consist of unlinked items that do not give a clear message to pupils. Most teachers have a recognised qualification in Religious Education.

A link governor has recently been appointed and has started to meet with the senior management to discuss religious education. This is in an early stage of development and minutes indicate that governors are not as well informed about the strengths and areas for improvement in religious education as they might be. However, this situation is improving rapidly as the acting headteacher provides opportunities for the subject leader to report to governors.

Grade [3]