



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **Christ the King Catholic Primary School**

Easton Hill Road Thornbury Bristol BS35 1AW

Telephone: 01454 866680

e-mail address: ChristTheKingPrimary.School@southglos.gov.uk

DfES School Number 803 3436

Headteacher: Mrs Carol Lawler

Chair of Governors: Fr Alex McAllister

---

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: 21-22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009

Date of previous inspection: October 2006

Reporting Inspector: Mr J Skivington

## **Description of School**

Christ the King is a smaller than average size primary school which serves the parishes of Thornbury and Wotton in South Gloucestershire. It currently has 125 pupils, of whom 55% are baptised Catholic. The majority are from White British background but around 8% of pupils have English as an additional language. The school welcomes a significant number of Traveller children. Pupils represent a wide range of abilities, they are drawn from a wide mix of backgrounds, including families living in South Thornbury which features as the second and third quintile of the most deprived in England for certain domains. Prior attainment on entry is broadly below average with 28% identified as having special education needs. There are close fruitful links with the parish. Although the church lies some distance away from the school, the parish priest is chaplain, chair of governors, and link governor for religious education. The school has come through a recent period of staff changes and there is now a stable permanent staff of seven, five of whom are Catholic.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

**Grade 3**

The overall effectiveness of Christ the King in providing for the Catholic life of the school and religious education, is satisfactory and improving, with both good and outstanding features. The sound leadership of the head teacher, supported by an increasingly involved governing body, is reflected in the commitment of staff and parents to provide the best standards of care and education for the children. The governors ensure that the school lives up to its mission by careful appointments and admission policies. The mission of the school is at the forefront of all planning, recently reinvigorated by a whole school community examination of the mission statement. Sufficient inset time is devoted to deepening the staff's understanding of the Catholic ethos and spiritual life of the school. The school works successfully to promote community cohesion. Provision for the prayer life of the school is excellent and has a significant impact on the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. Provision for religious education is satisfactory but steadily improving. Teaching and learning although overall satisfactory, has much that is good, with some outstanding practice observed during the inspection. The leadership and management of the religious education programme are both satisfactory.

## **Improvement since the last inspection**

**Grade 3**

In the areas highlighted by the previous inspection there has been satisfactory progress. An improvement in the subject knowledge of teachers has been the result of regular, input from the chaplain and head teacher, but there is still serious work to be done in drawing up a curriculum and schemes of work which both support teachers' lesson planning and are more closely tailored to meet the learning needs of all groups of pupils. The development of assessment procedures and level indicators is work in progress and already providing data to track individual pupil's progress, and set realistic targets for improvement.

**The capacity of the school community to improve and develop****Grade 3**

The stability and professionalism of the present teaching staff will ensure a significant improvement in learning outcomes. The school knows itself well and planning lays out clearly the aims and timescale for improvement. The commitment and increasing hands-on involvement of the governing body will be a key element in driving up standards of achievement.

**What the school should do to improve further**

- Review the current RE scheme in light of new guidelines.
- Implement a consistent policy of marking written work so that pupils are shown how to improve and are aware of what they are aiming for
- Focus on developing independent learning skills, and provide real challenge particularly for the more able pupils
- To plan a colourful, informative programme which will enable pupils to understand other world religions and religious practices.

**The Catholic Life of the School****Leadership and Management****Grade 2**

The head teacher, together with the governing body and staff, is fully committed to maintaining the school's high quality of care and education, and is successful in nurturing the remarkably strong Catholic ethos of the school. A recent revisit and reflection on the school's mission was an inspiring exercise, which involved parents, pupils and staff. Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and outcomes of the Catholic ethos is documented, and acted upon. Inset days are used well not only to discuss the Catholic life of the school but also to induct new staff at the start of the year. In addition the chaplain and head teacher run frequent sessions to introduce topics in the RE programme and provide theological support and catechesis. The inclusion of all learners is central to the vision of the school, through its belief that all are created in the image of God. Close links are maintained with parish and parents, local schools and support from the diocese advisory service. There is less opportunity to have links with other Catholic schools given its rural location. Leadership at all levels promotes the spiritual and moral development of the children, not only through teaching but by the example and excellent role modelling of all the significant adults in the pupils' lives.

**Collective Worship****Grade 1**

This is a strength of the school. The quality of collective worship and the liturgical life of the school are both excellent, with invaluable support from the parish priest, who is closely involved in the life of the school. Masses are celebrated on a regular basis, and all pupils are keen to participate. Pupils take the lead two or three times a year in the parish mass, and welcome parishioners to the school masses on holy days. Assemblies are well planned and delivered with the full participation of the pupils themselves. They sing with great joy and enthusiasm. The prayer sessions in every year group were very impressive because of the reverence and genuineness of their faith and understanding of prayer. The beautiful and sensitively led

reception prayers showed how remarkably quickly new children come to recognise the symbolism of the candle and the crucifix, making the sign of the cross carefully and composing their own simple prayers. The sacramental programme is led from within the parish but supported by the school. The liturgical year is celebrated and becomes alive to the pupils through drama and music, such as the Stations of the Cross and the unfolding events of Holy Week. Prayer life of this high quality contributes enormously to the spiritual and moral development because it is imaginatively presented and communicates both the Faith and the messages of Jesus life and teaching through the Gospels.

## **Community Cohesion**

## **Grade 2**

The reputation of the school for its openness and welcome to all, especially in its care for the more vulnerable children, is exemplified in the breadth of intake which includes non Catholics as well as ethnic minorities, and a significant mission to the Traveller families passing through the locality. Exemplary care and concern for their education is shown to these latter children whose education is regularly disrupted. The school's openness and success is much appreciated by the LEA. The governors have a clear policy on community cohesion and bring real knowledge and understanding of local circumstances when promoting local projects. The views of those of different faiths and none are respected, and all are welcome to share the richness of the Catholic Faith. The pupils themselves feel fully part of the school's whole life. They learn about other cultures and raise money for a variety of overseas charities. The school is fortunate in its links with the Salvatorian Fathers because the pupils get to meet missionaries and learn about life for other, less fortunate children. At present they are involved in supporting an orphanage in Tanzania. The RE curriculum touches on other world religions but in no depth, so that when asked the pupils have almost no idea what others believe or practice. The school is aware of this and appropriate action to rectify this is in the development plan. The pupils make a good contribution to the school through the school council and they believe that their voice is listened to.

---

## **Religious Education**

### **Achievement and Standards in Religious Education**

### **Grade 3**

Pupils enter the school with widely varying levels of religious knowledge and skills. They make satisfactory progress through both key stages. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve as well as the others because of the extra help they receive in lessons, particularly from excellent teaching assistants who show real care for them, and when they are given tasks which are tailored to their learning needs. Traveller children make good progress while they are in the school's care but achievement is hampered by interrupted school attendance. In reception progress is swift, with pupils quickly come to recognise and understand religious symbolism and the special nature of places and events, such as the prayer corner, the Mass, or the time for prayer at the start of the day or before meals. As they move up the school they can make links with their own experiences and emotions and the connection between belief and actions. They learn about the Sacraments and the saints, as well as the importance and consequences of choices. They achieve a satisfactory grasp of the main tenets of the faith but find it difficult to recall or explain the meaning of, say, parables, or find a reference in the Gospels. Their knowledge of

key biblical figures is less strong, but they can speak of prayer with understanding and can explain the types of prayer we use. The outcomes in learning and progress are not as good as they could be because they write very little in their books, and opportunities for more extended imaginative writing in response to what they are learning, are missed. There is no sense of progress and deepening of their faith and understanding. There are some short thoughtful written pieces, and prayers which are personal and heartfelt, but few and far between. Pupils contribute much to the school community through the active school council and the care shown to the younger pupils by the older ones, who look out for them and befriend them particularly on the playground. The pupils are also very active in raising money for charities through their own planning and organisation. Their behaviour in and out of lessons is excellent, with the older ones and peer mentors looking after the younger ones with real care, and a daily commitment to being readily available.

## **Teaching and learning in Religious Education**

**Grade 2**

Much of the teaching observed in the inspection was good and potentially outstanding. In some cases the scheme of work needs to be updated to help staff draw out clearer Learning Objectives. Where teaching was satisfactory the lessons were too teacher led, with activities that did not enthuse or challenge the children, or encourage independent learning. In the majority (good) lessons strategies encouraged reflective learning. For example, in a lesson on creation the pupils enjoyed the excellent strategy of 'creating' plants, fish, and animals with great inventiveness and success, getting into the mind of the Creator. Teaching assistants give excellent support with the right level of encouragement and challenge. The marking of the small amount of written work is often of no real help in showing pupils what they must do to improve. However, there are good learning outcomes in class and group discussions, where they listen and respond well and are able to assess each other's knowledge and understanding. Pupils work well together and their behaviour and involvement in lessons is good. They themselves say that they really enjoy the subject when learning is activity driven, and that they can always turn to their teachers to help them if they do not understand.

## **Quality of the Curriculum**

**Grade 3**

The RE curriculum meets the requirements of the Directory satisfactorily, but is in urgent need of interpretation and 'fleshing out' to meet the needs of all the pupils, and indeed the needs of the teachers who are planning their lessons. The Here I Am syllabus is followed. The sacramental preparation programme is well run by the parish with the close involvement of the school, not least through the marvellous dedication of a Lunch Time Leader and School Governor.

The sex and relationship programme is well planned based on the 'In the Beginning' programme. There is further enrichment in the curriculum making good use of the links with the parish, the local community, and through the many fundraising events for charities. There are visits to other churches and the opportunity for Year 6 to go on retreat. The distribution of food parcels to elderly people was much appreciated with many letters of thanks and praise for the children. All these activities allow the pupils to exercise their spirit of generosity by becoming involved in helping and caring for others. The lack of a substantial exploration of other world religions is being corrected in the future development plans. Pupils will study the beliefs and traditions of the main world religions through assemblies and lessons.

**Leadership and management of Religious Education****Grade 3**

Leadership and management of the subject falls to the head teacher, amongst her many other responsibilities. Planning is very much linked to the mission of the school. Every class has beautifully carved wooden cupped hands in which the children place their prayers and offerings to remind them they are in God's hands. Teachers are supported by sessions to help them at the beginning of each new topic, with theological input from the school chaplain, and regular Inset on the Catholic Faith. A scheme of work which was carefully thought out and resourced leading to sharply defined lesson plans would make a tremendous difference to the learning outcomes and enjoyment of the pupils. Lesson observations and book trawls likewise need to be conducted in order to share best practice and monitor pupils' progress. Assessment procedures are being updated with growing expertise in using the new level indicators. Equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that, for example, the disabled or vulnerable children get the very best quality care and attention. Resources are of satisfactory quality and well managed, with ICT increasingly used to support teaching. The colourful displays of children's work on the walls and corridors not only affirm their efforts, but proclaim the strong Catholic ethos of Christ the King.

Governors discharge their responsibilities towards religious education with care and a closer, challenging watch over, and evaluation, of the quality of religious education teaching and learning will be of enormous benefit in ensuring every child reaches their potential.