



INSPECTION REPORT

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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DfES Number: 933448

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Chair of Governors: Mrs S Bosanquet

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: 22 - 23 May 2007
Date of previous inspection: 3 - 4 April 2003
Reporting Inspector: Mrs M Foster

Description of School

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Primary School serves the parish of St Luke and St Teresa, Wincanton and the outlying Mass centres of Castle Cary and Milborne Port. The school attracts pupils from a wide catchment area and parents provide transport from outlying villages or take advantage of a school bus, run principally for Secondary pupils. There are 90 families whose children attend the school.

There are 116 pupils on roll, with slightly more boys than girls. Thirty-five per cent of pupils come from a Catholic background. Recently the number of children entering the school with English as an additional language (EAL) has increased, as Polish and Portuguese families join the community.

On entry the Foundation Stage Profile was in line with the national average. Eleven percent of pupils have Special Educational Needs. No child has a statement of Special Educational Need. One pupil is funded for additional support at School Action Plus. Pupils come from generally advantaged backgrounds with the number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals being below the national average.

The school is sited in part of the grounds of the former Carmelite Priory. At the time of the inspection the school was in the middle of a building programme to re-model the main house. This is scheduled to be completed in October and will result in a greatly improved learning environment.

During the inspection two members of staff, one of whom is the Assistant Head, were absent.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

The leadership of the school engenders a strong sense of mission and a clear vision for the direction of the school. This is shared and worked towards by all the school community. The management of Religious Education (R.E) and the liturgical and prayer life of the school are very effective. Standards in R.E. are good. The school has a clear view of its strengths and which areas it needs to develop and has good capacity to improve.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has adopted the national RE programme "Here I am" to address the issue of a clear structure for the delivery of RE, which was identified at the last inspection in 2003. Since that time the staff have had time to familiarise themselves with its content and adapt it to their own particular context. The school follows the model which teaches the same theme throughout all classes to maximise opportunities for Assemblies and to share resources.

The Annual Reports to parents have been reviewed and improvements made to bring them in line with expected standards.

New resources have been purchased as part of a continuing plan to improve the quality of resources in RE. Every child in the school has received a Bible of his or her own from the *Free Bibles for Children* scheme and parents have reported that their children are requesting stories

from them to be read at bed-time. A class set of Bibles for Years 5 and 6 has been purchased to enable opportunities for working on texts and it is planned to buy different editions for use in school.

Grade 2

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The headteacher and governors of the school are committed to the concept of self-evaluation and improvement and are well-placed to take forward development. The school evaluates its performance and is aware of its strengths and weaknesses. For example, although some of the systems for monitoring progress are in place, procedures to use this information consistently for future planning are not yet sufficiently established.

Grade 2

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the role of the new RE Link Governor
- Develop a more structured system for monitoring teaching and learning across the school
- Expand the use of ICT to extend learning opportunities in RE
- Continue to develop resources

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The school meets its aim which is to ensure that the Catholic faith is at its heart, underpinning all aspects of school life. This commitment is shared by the whole school community who are aware of their joint responsibility to show the love of God and of each other in their daily lives. This contributes strongly to the ethos of the school.

Governors are closely involved with the school and provide a model of Christian witness in action. They support the school through attending liturgies, supporting children with EAL through individual help in language and numeracy; monitoring the dropping off and collection of children at each end of the school day and by visiting classes assigned to their care. They attend the school monthly Sunday Mass which is celebrated in the parish Church. From time to time they record their findings on a useful evaluation sheet, celebrating pupils' achievements. The governors' support is outstanding. They have a monitoring policy which, if applied systematically, would provide the means of evaluating the impact of their work on standards in the school.

Very good links with parents, parish and outside agencies reflect the excellent quality of relationships within the school community. Parents provide support in many ways, including taking the responsibility of supervising children's arrival at school until the first bell, to give staff time to prepare for the day ahead. Generosity of spirit is a hallmark of the school community.

The Headteacher leads by example and there is a vibrant team spirit among the staff, all of whom give generously of their time and talent to support each other and improve opportunities for the pupils.

Pupils have explicit responsibilities to care for each other. As part of the induction process for Foundation Stage children, each Year 6 pupil takes responsibility for caring for one particular child. This Buddy system continues until the peer group relationships are established. The process develops pupils' ability to act maturely and thoughtfully and provides an example of the second commandment in practice.

Grade 2

The Prayer Life of the School

Prayer is central to the life of the school. Pupils are taught the prayers of the Church and are confident in extemporaneous prayer. Every RE lesson ends with a time for reflection and a prayer linked to the theme, so that children have an opportunity to think quietly about their learning and apply it to themselves in a prayerful context.

Liturgies are well-planned and pupils are actively engaged. Year 6 pupils take responsibility for an Easter Reflection which involves meditations on Holy Week, readings, prayers, songs and dance. They thereby grow in their own understanding of the Paschal Mystery and contribute to the understanding of the other pupils.

High quality Art and drama are used effectively to celebrate festivals such as Easter and Christmas and the May procession. Videos and photographs of these activities are then shown to pupils to raise their self-esteem and to give an opportunity to reflect prayerfully on the experience.

Pupils pray with reverence and respect.

The school and parish work in partnership. The school takes responsibility for the monthly shared Mass. A committee of school staff and parishioners plan the liturgy and then prepares the pupils for whatever role they are taking – readings, Bidding Prayers, singing or dance. The time given to the preparation confirms the importance of the Mass as central to our faith. One parent commented on "the wonderful way in which children are encouraged to express their faith in music, dance and song."

Parents and parishioners also attend Mass in school and the celebration of festivals such as the May Procession, the Harvest Festival and Assemblies. They support the prayer life of the school and act as witnesses of a praying community.

Collective worship makes an outstanding contribution to the moral and spiritual development of pupils.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

For most learners standards are good overall, being similar to those in literacy. The pupils' oral fluency strongly supports their learning.

Scrutiny of work shows that pupils make good progress through the year and from year to year. Pupils with EAL and pupils with SEN also make good progress.

The very good behaviour of the pupils supports their learning and enables teachers to focus on the acquisition of knowledge and understanding rather than behaviour management.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Pupils enjoy RE and the quality of teaching and learning in the three lessons observed was good overall. Learning objectives were shared at the beginning of each lesson and in two cases were written on the board and read aloud so that the pupils were clear about what they were expected to learn.

Teachers used a variety of successful techniques: explanation, questioning, story reading and humour to engage pupils' interest. All teachers observed revisited prior learning so that pupils could recall what they knew and more readily access new learning.

Lesson plans were well structured and organisation clear. Effective use of Teaching Assistants supported pupils with EAL or SEN in tasks which were planned for their individual learning needs. More able pupils generally work at the same tasks as the majority in the class and only work on independent projects from time to time.

The pace of the lessons was brisk and pupils who became distracted were quickly and calmly brought back to task. Pupils were well-motivated and worked purposefully. Most pupils listened to each other, shared opinions and co-operated well to further their learning. They were confident in sharing their work with the rest of the class which helped to clarify their own thinking and the understanding of the listeners.

Pupils were eager to answer questions and teachers were positive in their responses, praising pupils for their thinking and expanding their comments to further understanding. The plenary was used well to recall the learning objectives and to provide a reflective time for prayer.

Marking is positive and encouraging but does not show pupils how they can improve their work.

Regular assessment is carried out at the end of each "Here I am" unit to ascertain pupils' progress and attainment. At the end of the year this record is passed on to the next teacher. Long term tracking of pupils' progress is not fully in place and will form part of the school's development plan (SDP).

During the inspection the significant contribution of two valued members of staff, one of whom is the Assistant Head, was lost through absence.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in relation to its content and the allocation of time. It follows the national programme of "Here I am", with the school's additional areas of study. It is firmly based on Gospel values, evident in the shared beliefs, celebrations and in the example of all the adults in the school community.

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is appropriate for young children and the classroom is a vibrant and stimulating learning environment. Good procedures are in place for pupils starting school and for liaison with parents.

The school has a policy for education for personal relationships and sex relationship education (EPR and SRE). It is, however, aware that a more structured programme, such as "In the Beginning", would enhance the provision and plans to introduce it next year. The current programme fulfils the DfES requirements and is set in a moral context. Parents are informed and are told of their right to withdraw their child. No one has yet done so, evidence of their confidence in the headteacher and assistant head who teach the programme.

All pupils make appropriate progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Great emphasis is placed on fostering positive relationships which contribute to the strong sense of belonging. This is supported by the distinctive, well-established ethos of the school which creates a strong sense of community. All pupils are given opportunities for reflective periods each day and become increasingly aware of their spirituality. Consideration of the virtues of tolerance, compassion and understanding helps to broaden pupils' perspective on their own and other's conduct. Behaviour is very good with pupils cooperating well in class.

Aspects of healthy living including the importance of diet and exercise are covered in the curriculum and given excellent exemplification in the equality of the school meals. Parents support the school's Healthy eating policy by avoiding food with excessive sugar or fat in their child's packed lunch. Health and Care workers visit the school to contribute to pupils' understanding and the *Life Education Centre* bus will enrich their experience.

Frequent opportunities to present and celebrate their work through performance, fosters pupils' self-confidence and maturity and contributes to their sense of achievement. Pupils in Year 6 have opportunities to develop their initiative through organising fund raising events for those less fortunate than themselves.

The inclusion of every individual is central to the shared vision of the school. The support of all learners, particularly those from different cultures, is evident in the day to day life of the school through its ethos. Staff plan effectively for the progress of those who could be considered vulnerable and monitor their progress with care and sensitivity.

There is a strong sense of community identity and belonging which is fostered by the shared rituals, such as the May procession. This demonstrates the importance of witness and tradition and impacts on the wider community who come out of neighbouring houses to watch it.

Pupils show respect for each other's differences and although there is not yet whole school teaching of other world faiths in a structured way, multi faith and multicultural issues are addressed in RE, Geography, history and personal social and health education (PSHE).

Pupils feel valued and are proud of their school. They consider it to be a special place with special people in it. They judge that they can express their own opinions without fear of ridicule or any form of unkindness.

They have utter confidence in the adults who care for them and trust their ability to keep them safe and happy. As one Year 6 pupil said "If I had a problem I would tell my teacher and she would help me sort it out. She guides us and helps us all the time."

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The Headteacher is the RE Co-ordinator. He is well informed about the teaching and learning practices in the school. He is also conscious of the need to increase his awareness of current issues in RE and plans to be more involved in the Diocesan meetings to support subject leaders. Having this additional responsibility for RE adds to his already heavy work load.

Governors know the statutory requirements for RE and ensure that they are met. They also review policies regularly. The Link RE Governor is new to the post and is therefore not familiar with "Here I am" or yet involved in the monitoring or evaluation of RE. This will be addressed in the SDP.

There has been one day's productive training on RE during this academic year. The focus of this training was to match the themes of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)

programme to "Here I am". The impact made on pupils' learning by integrating these themes will be reviewed at the end of this year. A further staff training day off-site on aspects of personal well-being, gives evidence of leadership's attention to their duty of care towards the staff.

Monitoring is generally at an informal level. It is done through Headteacher's visits to classes, sampling of children's work and discussion with individual teachers. The school would benefit from a more formal, structured approach to monitoring. This could include a planned programme of lesson observations and regular scrutiny of pupils' work involving all teachers, so as to ensure that the impetus for planned improvement continues.

As part of Performance Management one target for each teacher is related to RE. This gives the subject appropriate status and supports continuous improvement.

Grade 2