



INSPECTION REPORT

Our Lady of Mount Carmel R.C. Primary School

Tout Hill, Wincanton BA9 9DH

Telephone: 0196332660

e-mail address: office@ourladys.somerset.sch.uk

DÆS Number:

Headteacher: Mr Jerome Mc Cormack
Chair of Governors: Mrs Sue 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: 25-26th February 2010

Date of previous inspection: April 2007

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington

Description of School

A small size primary school Our Lady's has 119 pupils on roll of whom 37% are Catholic. The pupils are mostly from a White British background, but there is an increasing number who have English as an additional language (27%). The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is below average. The head teacher was appointed last year. The school has strong and fruitful links with the Ss Luke and Teresa parish. 57% of the staff are Catholic. It receives excellent support from the priest, the parish and the parents.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

Our Lady of Mount Carmel is a good school with a growing number of outstanding features. It provides a strong and positive Catholic education for all its pupils. It is a fully inclusive community where all are welcome and accepted as individuals made in the image of God, within an environment characterised by openness to, and clear links with the parents, the parish, and the wider community. Pupils participate enthusiastically in and respond well to the excellent faith enriching provision for prayer life and liturgy. The proximity of the parish church and the involvement of pupils in parish life demonstrate the sense of the mission of the school being part of the wider mission of the Church.

Outcomes from the Catholic life of the school and pupils' response and contribution to it are outstanding. The outcomes from the religious education subject programme are good. This is the result of good teaching throughout the school with some excellent practice observed during the inspection. The school acknowledges that more could be done to ensure even greater progression. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as the others because of extra support in lessons and when they have tasks suited to their learning needs. The religious education programme makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

Grade 2

The school's capacity to sustain the high quality of care and education it provides is good. The new leadership has taken over and re energised an already improved school. The areas for development highlighted in the last inspection have been effectively tackled particularly the monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress. The governors have been involved in a recent review of the mission statement, and this supports and encourages the whole school community. There is a proven effectiveness in using resources to tackle areas needing development and a readiness to seek ways to overcome any and all barriers to improvement. Enthusiastic leadership effectively communicates an ambitious vision for the Catholic dimension of the school, and high expectation.

What the school should do to improve further

- To ensure lesson objectives consistently aim to encourage independent learning, and are pitched to meet the varied learning needs of the pupils, particularly the more able.
 - To tailor and enrich the RE curriculum through more detailed schemes of work so that teaching and learning are more effective.
 - Extend the review of the Mission Statement so that the whole community including students are involved.
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How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?

Grade 1

Student involvement in the Catholic life of the school is outstanding and they make an excellent contribution to it. The school council gives pupils a strong sense of ownership and responsibility and ensures that their voice is heard. For example, they were wholly responsible in composing the school prayer. They take responsibility for their own lives and the care of the younger children. They absorb easily the shared values lived out in the Catholic ethos of the school and have a sound awareness of spiritual and moral matters which they are able to articulate well. They take full ownership in planning and preparing assemblies and Masses in school, and are loyal and enthusiastic servers at the altar in the parish Masses. They respond generously to the needs of others beyond the school, and this makes a valuable contribution to the welcoming openness and inclusivity of the school. Many are involved in fundraising for a variety of charities both home and overseas. Their behaviour, deportment around the school, their friendliness and eagerness to help, their well-internalised spirituality, are all outcomes of which their teachers and parents are rightly proud.

Their response to and participation in the prayer life of the school is outstanding. They play an active part in liturgies, sing joyously, and compose their own very beautiful and heartfelt prayers which are used in lessons daily. Themes are appropriate to the liturgical season. The pupils' demeanour and reverence at prayer, even in Reception, demonstrates they have grasped the significance of a special time and place for reflective stillness and prayer. They are successfully learning the skills of planning, preparing and presenting their own assemblies, which parents and governors often attend. Parents and the wider church community support their spiritual and moral development through positive role modelling, led by the very positive commitment of the parish priest.

Achievement and progress in religious education is good throughout the school, but outstanding at Reception and Key Stage 1, where they make excellent progress in a very short time. Learning outcomes for the older pupils are less good, because the level of challenge and the choice of material and tasks, do not always match the abilities of the more able. On occasion opportunities to develop critical thinking skills, particularly in learning from religion, are missed. However, they can discuss the topics they cover fluently with understanding and relate them to their own lives. They have a good grasp of the main tenets of the Faith, for instance, the significance of the Last Supper, or the divinity of Jesus, as well as understanding the message of Jesus through His miracles and parables. The rate of progress of the less able pupils and those with special educational needs, including those with English as an additional language, is similar to the other pupils. In lessons pupils work hard and enjoy the subject, particularly when they are challenged and engaged by effective teaching strategies, which involve them in their own learning.

How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic Life of the school?

Grade 2

Good leadership and management promote the Catholic life of the school effectively, with frequent monitoring, reviews, appraisal, and focussed planning for future improvement. The Catholic ethos of the school colours all of its activities. There is frequent and substantial Inset for staff and governors on spirituality and Catholic education. A long term liturgical programme and a spirituality audit are being planned, one example of the methodical approach to the school's priorities by the relatively new and less experienced leadership. The school development plan objectives are linked closely to performance management. The calibre of leadership and management is seen further in the high morale of the staff, the pupil's good care for one another, and the very good relationships between staff and pupils. The recent improvements to the school facilities, such as the playground, classrooms and the prayer gazebo, all engender a warm and welcoming atmosphere and impressive resources for learning.

The governing body is made up of knowledgeable and challenging members who are totally committed to sustaining the high standards in every area of school life. They have regular training on spirituality and Catholic education. They were closely involved from the outset in drawing up the school's RE self-evaluation document. The chair of governors is a frequent visitor and works closely in the classroom with the teachers. All statutory and canonical responsibilities are met.

There is a clear policy promoted by governors and senior staff to promote community cohesion with the result that the school has an exemplary openness to all, all are included in its life, and its generous outreach to the local and the global community is a real strength. The school collaborates well with other schools and participates in community undertakings, including local charities and visits to the elderly. The curriculum provides an exploration of the other faiths through specific topics and International Days, but given its rural surroundings cannot easily provide interface with, or visits from or to, those of other world religions. The pupils of other denominations or faiths feel that they are able to express their own beliefs comfortably, and all feel included and welcomed into every aspect of school life. The school provides excellent support for pupils with English as an additional language, and generous outreach to immigrant families who feel marginalized in the local community.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 2

Provision for prayer life is outstanding, a real strength of the school, because it meets very effectively the spiritual needs of the pupils, be it through assemblies and liturgies, or the opportunities for retreat, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and support for the parish-run preparation programme for First Holy Communion. A recent drive to familiarise the pupils with the basic formulaic prayers, and responses at Mass, addressed a real need. There are many occasions during the day for spiritual nourishment through prayer and moments of reflection. The liturgical year is well marked and celebrated, particularly Advent, Lent and Holy Week. The May procession is becoming a significant day when the school can witness to the local community its Faith and devotion to its patron saint Our Lady of Mount Carmel. All pupils participate with enthusiasm and willingness, and as they move up the school, with increasing confidence and conviction.

The curriculum successfully meets the needs of all groups of pupils, as well as meeting the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education requirements, such as the allocation of time. The Here I Am programme is perceived by the school as not sufficient on its own to meet teachers' and pupils' needs, and work needs to be done on enriching and fleshing out the present schemes of work and related lesson plans and objectives. The governors and senior leadership are well aware of their obligations vis a vis the curriculum, and are working with help from other partnership schools towards the best provision. Relationship education is dealt with sensitively and clearly from a Catholic standpoint. The beliefs of other faiths are explored through topics in the schemes of work. Resources are well managed, and ICT is used skilfully and imaginatively to colour and enrich the learning experience.

The quality of teaching and purposeful learning is good throughout, with some outstanding practice observed particularly with the younger children. When teaching is at its best it enables the pupils to learn really well because it engages their interest and provides challenge, so that the pupils themselves do the work and make the intellectual effort. Group and paired work were especially effective strategies because they provided peer learning and assessment. Where teaching was less effective the teacher talked more, pupils listened and answered questions when asked, but the needs of the more able pupils were not specifically planned for with sufficient challenge built in. Proactive teaching assistants provide invaluable support especially in allowing the teacher to split children into smaller groups with differentiated tasks tailored to their learning needs. The scrutiny of written work shows that where marking is helpful it makes a real difference to presentation, length and quality of work. Pupils' work and behaviour in lessons is excellent and they are enthusiastic about those aspects of the teaching they are receiving, which provide new knowledge and insights, challenging peer and group learning, and high expectation.

Assessment procedures are embedded and effective. Developing use is made of level indicators to monitor progress and achievement. Tracking of individual progress is well developed, and provides teachers with a clearer picture of each pupil's strengths and where support and guidance are needed. The school is aware that this knowledge is not always translated into the lesson plan to meet the learning needs of all the pupils, but it is sharing and promoting good practice particularly through lesson observations and scrutiny of written work.