



INSPECTION REPORT

St. George's Catholic Primary School

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D/ES Number: 5207

Headteacher: Mrs Molly Johnston

Chair of Governors: Mrs Sarah Lettin

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: March 11-12th 2010
Date of previous inspection: 26-27th January 2006

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington

Description of School

St. George's is a smaller than average size primary school, which serves two parishes – St. George's in Warminster and St. Bernadette's in Westbury. There are 122 pupils on roll of whom 57% are baptised Catholic. The school has strong and lively links with the parish and secondary school St. Augustine's, and counts itself blessed by having the active involvement of the parish priest who is a frequent visitor in the school. The majority of children are White British with few having English as a second language. Numbers of pupils with special educational needs are above average. The head teacher was confirmed in post in September 2008, and the recently appointed religious education coordinator is being monitored and mentored by the previous post holder. Around half of the staff are Catholic. Recent changes in staff reflect a falling roll.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

The overall effectiveness of St. George's is good, with outstanding outcomes in terms of Catholic life and spiritual development. It is a welcoming, warm, fully inclusive community where all are accepted as individuals made in the image of God, and its ethos is characterised by openness to, and clear links with the parents, the parish, and the wider community. All pupils participate enthusiastically in and respond well to the excellent faith enriching provision for prayer life and liturgy.

Outcomes from the religious education programme are good and improving further. This is the result of solidly good teaching throughout the school with some excellent practice observed during the inspection. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as the others because they have tasks well tailored to their learning needs and because of the extra support provided by teaching assistants. The religious education programme makes an excellent contribution in particular to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

Grade 2

The school has worked successfully in developing the areas for improvement highlighted by the last inspection, and has a good capacity to sustain improvement in providing a high quality of care and education. Procedures of monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress are embedded and are beginning to secure better outcomes. The schemes of work provide well planned steps to ensure progress across all years. There is a proven effectiveness in using resources to tackle areas needing development and a determination to continue seeking ways to overcome any and all barriers to improvement. Leadership communicates well an ambitious vision and high expectation for the Catholic dimension of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- To ensure that the learning needs of the more able pupils, particularly in the middle years of the school, are planned for in a more challenging way in teachers' lesson objectives
- To move on the secure monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress so that they begin to inform and shape more effective teaching and learning strategies.

How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?

Grade 1

All pupils are fully involved in the Catholic life of the school, with no group or individual excluded and they make an excellent contribution to it. Relative to their ages they are remarkably mature in terms of their spiritual, moral and theological development. For example, in Year 6 they were able to hold with focus an intellectually taxing discussion on why God made us. They feel their voice is heard through the school council opportunities for feedback, and 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, have customised the school mission statement in their own words, and have a sound awareness of spiritual and moral matters which they are able to articulate well. Their capacity for praise and forgiveness is evident in their excellent behaviour and care for each other. They have developed well the skills of planning and presenting their own liturgies and assemblies. They respond generously to the needs of others beyond the school, and this makes a valuable contribution to the welcoming openness and inclusiveness of the school. Many are involved in fundraising for a variety of charities both home and overseas.

Their response to and participation in the prayer life of the school is outstanding. They play an proactive part in liturgies, sing enthusiastically, and can use a variety of prayer styles composed by themselves, as in some beautiful prayers of praise after the manner of the psalms. Their attitude and demeanour and reverence at prayer, even the very youngest, demonstrate their lively understanding of the sacred.

Achievement and progress in religious education is good throughout the school with some excellent achievement in Year 6 in terms of emerging evaluation skills and learning from religion. They can discuss the topics they cover easily and relate them to their own lives. Progress is swift in the early years where they come to absorb the basic concepts and symbolism of religious language, and can retell and sequence the parables and stories about Jesus. 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. In some lessons in the middle years more able pupils particularly are not always given sufficiently challenging tasks to match their abilities, often because the lesson objectives do not take full account of their learning needs. 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, through group and paired work.

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

Grade 2

Leadership and management promote the Catholic life of the school effectively, with clear self evaluating procedures that include frequent monitoring, reviews, appraisal, and focussed planning for future improvement. The Catholic ethos of the school imbues all of its activities. Care is taken to revisit the mission of the school frequently, with dedicated Inset at the start of the year for staff and governors on spirituality and Catholic education. Prayer life and liturgies are monitored and reviewed effectively, with close liaison between governors and senior leadership. The school development plan objectives are linked closely to performance management. The good calibre of leadership and management is seen in the high morale of the staff, the pupil's good care for one another, and the very good relationships between staff and pupils. All staff, particularly those who are not Catholic, receive valuable support through regular twilight sessions in understanding the nature of a Catholic school and supporting teaching RE.

The governing body is totally committed to sustaining high standards in every area of school life and newer members are becoming more experienced and involved. The parish priest, who is also the link governor for RE, is a frequent and popular visitor, and brings tremendous support and dedication to explaining the Faith, the liturgical year, and Catholic practices such as the Rosary. All statutory and canonical responsibilities are met.

The provision and promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. There is a clear policy and enthusiasm to encourage community cohesion with the result that the school has an 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 has gained the Intermediate International Schools Award and is working towards the full award. The school collaborates well with other schools and participates in a large number of community undertakings, including local charities. The school welcomes visiting Comenius students on a regular basis. The curriculum provides an opportunity to explore other faiths, although it is difficult given the local area and location, to provide easily visits to other places of worship and interface with those of other world faiths. Multi - Faith Days provide an excellent opportunity to study World Faiths and pupils are genuinely interested in the beliefs and cultures of others. Links with schools of different faiths and beliefs in Britain are being planned. Those 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. Support for charities such as the Colombian street children, and Fair Trade give them a wider vision of the needs of others and their responsibilities to share and take concerned action.

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 preparation programme for First Holy Communion. There are many occasions during the day for spiritual nourishment through prayer and moments of reflection. The school has a well used but small prayer room and is planning a bigger facility. The liturgical year is well marked and celebrated,

particularly Advent, Lent and Holy Week. All pupils participate with enthusiasm and willingness, and as they move up the school, with more 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. 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, art and music particularly are used imaginatively to colour and enrich the learning experience. Attractive displays around the school reflect the liturgical year and the topics the pupils are studying.

The quality of teaching and purposeful learning is good throughout the school, with some outstanding practice observed particularly with the older children. Teaching enables the pupils to learn really well because it engages their interest and provides challenge, particularly in searching questioning, so that the pupils themselves do the work and make the intellectual effort. Group and paired work are especially effective strategies because they provide peer learning and assessment. Where teaching was less effective it was not always pitched well, the pace was slower, and the needs of the more able pupils were not specifically planned for with sufficient challenge built in to the lesson objectives. 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 marking is helpful and makes a real difference to presentation, length and quality of work. Pupils' work and behaviour in lessons is excellent and they are enthusiastic about the subject. Their enjoyment is clearly evident.

Assessment procedures are well embedded and effective use is made of levels, which the children know, to monitor progress and achievement. Tracking of individual progress is being 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 now to be used and translated into the lesson plans and appropriate teaching strategies to meet the learning needs of all the pupils