



INSPECTION REPORT

SAINT EDMUND'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Mr Paul Blake
Chair of Governors: Mr William Simms

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: 28 March 2007
Date of previous inspection: 26 – 27 September 2002
Reporting Inspector: Mrs Ann Fowler

Description of School

Saint Edmund's Catholic Primary School serves the parish of Saint Edmund in the market town of Calne. Approximately 29% of the pupils at the school are baptised Catholics and the school welcomes pupils from a variety of faith backgrounds. The school is popular with parents who value the sense of community the school promotes.

Attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average and at 7% the number of pupils with special education needs is below the national average as is the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. There has been a recent increase in the number of pupils requiring speech and language support.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Saint Edmund's is a good school with some outstanding features. The headteacher has a very clear vision of what it means to be a Catholic school in the existing context. The governing body is extremely supportive of the headteacher and the school.

The school's ethos is distinctively Christian with its values and beliefs expressed in its every day life. The school generates a sense of family. Pupils and their families arrive early in school, some to do keep fit, some to eat breakfast or take part in other activities, some to talk to staff or each other. There is a real sense of community which the open plan aspect of the school enhances. Pupils are confident, outgoing and feel safe and secure. One year six pupil arriving in year five said "Right from the day I got here, I had friends, everyone was kind". This sense of community is a real strength of the school. The prayer life of the school is outstanding and flows naturally from and into all the daily activities of school life.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

There were no issues identified in the previous inspection.

Grade N/A

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The present headteacher is retiring this year but his leadership has ensured that the school is well supported by the community, staff and pupils. The school's self evaluation document is very reflective and thorough. The headteacher encourages the school community to consider what it means to be a Catholic school and how the ethos can be transmitted through every area of school life. Morale in the school is very high and the school is therefore in a good position to improve.

Religious Education in the classroom is the main area for development where the school could improve on existing good practice.

Grade 2

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further systems for assessment in Religious Education in particular pupils' self assessment
- Ensure that written tasks in Religious Education are sufficiently challenging and enable pupils to demonstrate the range of skills they show in oral work
- Formally incorporate into the syllabus the teaching of other faiths

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The headteacher brings great clarity of vision to the development of the ethos of the school. Christ is at the centre of all the school tries to do and this vision is understood by all including the pupils. In conversations with the pupils they were clearly able to articulate why the school is a Catholic school and the difference this makes. The headteacher and staff act as excellent role models and relationships within the school are open and supportive. Good systems are in place to develop pupils' leadership skills and they understand that service is a part of leadership. There is a strong positive interaction between pupils of all ages. During the lunchtime pupils sit in mixed aged groups at tables and each table has an adult present. Older pupils support younger ones and their spiritual and moral development is very good.

The links with the parish are good. The music teacher for example is also the leader of the music group for the parish. Some staff are also catechists. Pupils visit the church on a regular basis and the school is used as a venue for parish activities. The school supports many charitable activities including CAFOD and the 'Shoebbox Appeal'. Links with parents are good, a notice board for the school exists in the church, regular newsletters are sent out and there is a school website. The headteacher encourages parents to feel at home in the school and many parents take advantage of before and after school visits for informal discussions with staff.

The headteacher encourages staff to see the potential in all subjects for spiritual development. Governors regularly visit the school and there is a link governor for Religious Education. Religious Education is well supported in fact the headteacher places such value on Religious Education that he has taken on the role of Coordinator himself. There is a dedicated prayer room the 'Adytum' within the school which is used on a regular basis.

Grade 2

Collective Worship

The prayer life of the school is outstanding. There is a real sense that prayer underpins the life of the school and there are many opportunities both formal and informal where prayer takes place. Prayer is not simply confined to pupils. Staff pray together on a regular basis and parents are invited to join the pupils every Friday for assembly. On Holy Days the school joins the parish in Saint Edmund's Church. The Monday morning assembly is for the whole school and is always about revealing God through His Word. The reading used is an adapted version of one of the readings from the Sunday liturgy. At the end of assembly a copy of this is carried

in procession to each of the classrooms and used throughout the week. Pupils show a sense of reverence for God's Word and clearly understand the reading.

Parents are invited to the Friday afternoon assembly with an opportunity to socialise afterwards. Pupils are encouraged to write their own prayers and to plan their own liturgies in class. At the assembly witnessed there were a large number of pupils playing musical instruments to support the prayer and pupils sang every hymn in a joyful and reflective manner. Prayers are also said before and after lunch. Prayer is an integral part of each Religious Education lesson and in all subjects pupils are encouraged to be reflective. Spiritual and moral development is very good and the use of holistic topics encourages pupils to see the connections between faith and life. A recent example would be the topic of creation which was explored through a variety of subjects including geography, art, music, design and mathematics.

During the course of the inspection a large number of pupils met voluntarily in the 'Adytum' for prayer during the lunchtime which was led by a member of staff. At one stage pupils passed a candle round and as each pupil received the candle, they prayed for someone they knew who needed help which was done with great sensitivity and maturity. Pupils valued the opportunities for prayer, one pupil saying "You know you don't have to cope on your own".

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Pupils make good progress in their oral work in Religious Education demonstrating the ability to connect faith to life and to reflect on issues. The ability to make connections and be reflective is not always demonstrated in their written work. Work is very well presented in their books with pupils taking pride in their work. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress but more able pupils could be challenged more effectively. The school is using levels of attainment but has not as yet connected them to success criteria.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The quality of the teaching and learning observed was good. Pupils enjoy Religious Education and are highly motivated, they realise that the school sees the subject as important and react accordingly. Lessons were well planned and schemes of work clearly differentiated between different year groups. The lessons were well structured and used a variety of techniques including drama, music and freeze framing.

In one lesson observed pupils were given a variety of objects and asked to explain their significance to the events of Holy Week. Pupils were able to discuss as a group and produced thought provoking replies which also allowed them to recap their knowledge of the events of Holy Week in an interesting way.

In lessons making use of ICT the interactive whiteboards were used in ways that enhanced the lesson and provoked interest from students, for example, in a reflection using modern images of the Stations of the Cross.

All books were marked and teachers are beginning to make comments to help pupils reflect on their work. In general, work was not sufficiently differentiated especially for the more able pupils and written tasks do not reflect the high level of reflective thinking demonstrated in the lessons. The focus of written tasks in the books observed was based round prayer, short answer questions and retelling biblical stories. Although the pupils' knowledge of Bible stories is above average, tasks need to be enhanced to allow pupils to demonstrate thinking and evaluation skills.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The Religious Education Curriculum has been developed by the coordinator and is not based on 'Here I Am' although some elements are incorporated. The syllabus would benefit from being reconsidered since it is very biblically based at the moment. In particular the school needs to look at how it formally delivers its teaching on other faiths. From conversations with pupils their knowledge of other faiths needs to be made more explicit. There are strong cross curricular links which enhance the delivery of Religious Education and the school is making use of some aspects of the SEAL project for social and emotional development.

The subject is well resourced and follows Bishops' Conference recommendations for time allocation.

The governors have decided that at present their policy is not to formally adopt a programme for sex education.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The headteacher and all the staff are committed to ensuring the importance of Religious Education. His vision for the subject is clear and understood by staff. Books are monitored on a regular basis and the results fed back to staff. A formal programme of lesson observations has been carried out and again these observations are shared with staff.

The staff work as a team sharing the planning of lessons; they feel supported and able to call upon the headteacher for help if necessary. All staff work to create a calm purposeful atmosphere within the lessons.

The school is making use of levels of attainment in religious education although these don't always inform planning. Although staff have begun making diagnostic comments in pupils' books, pupils are not certain how to improve their work or what makes a piece of work good, so self assessment procedures need to be incorporated into the lessons.

Staff have been given the opportunity to develop their qualifications for example by completing the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies programme but do not generally attend diocesan inset courses. Resources are well used and managed. The governors have appointed a link governor to Religious Education and are very supportive of this area of school life.

Grade 2