



INSPECTION REPORT

Saint Catherine's Catholic Primary School

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Headteacher: Mrs Brenda Martin

Chair of Governors: Mr Neil Askins

Date of inspection: 5th to 6th December 2006

Date of previous inspection: November 1999

Reporting Inspector: Mr P Bates

Description of School

St Catherine's is an average sized primary school situated to the north-east of Swindon. There are 190 pupils on roll, of whom 89% are baptised Catholics. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and come from a wide range of backgrounds. There are few eligible for free school meals. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is above average and rising. There has been a considerable change in staff over recent years. Parents are very supportive of the school and there are very good links with the parish.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St Catherine's is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. The school provides a calm, warm and welcoming environment where the Catholic ethos is very evident. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in each key stage. Standards attained are good. Teaching is good, with some outstanding practice, and there is a willingness amongst staff to further improve existing good practice. Pupil behaviour is excellent. The Headteacher leads the school very well and she is well supported by a committed staff, both teaching and non teaching, together with an effective governing body.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

The last inspection was seven years ago and the key issues have been addressed. The Mission Statement is regularly revised by staff and governors and is prominently displayed around the school. Spirituality within the school is strong. There is a good Religious Education policy in place and all lessons have clear learning objectives.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The priorities for improvement of RE are derived from the school's self evaluation and are included in the School's Improvement Plan for the current school year. The strong commitment and unity of purpose amongst headteacher, staff, governors and parish community are factors that will help ensure the present high standards are maintained and form a good base for further improvement.

Grade 2

What the school should do to improve further

- 1 Ensure that there is appropriate differentiation in lessons so that there is greater challenge for the more able pupils
 - 2 Continue to monitor teaching and learning regularly to ensure that standards are consistent throughout the school
 - 3 Use assessments for future planning
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The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The governing body carries out its responsibilities in relation to the Catholic life of the school very efficiently. They are kept well informed about procedures and priorities in the school by the headteacher and are very supportive. The leadership of the headteacher, who is also the RE coordinator, is excellent and her guiding hand is seen in all areas of the school's activities. There is clear guidance for the school in its Catholic and academic life. The leadership very effectively promotes learners' spiritual and moral development and an ethos of Catholic life pervades the school. The school Religious Education Action Plan is very thorough and clearly identifies the development needs of the school.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

There is a variety of opportunity for prayer throughout the school. Pupils respond to all forms of worship with respect and reverence. They know their prayers, pray regularly each day, before and after meals and during RE lessons. When given the opportunity for quiet reflection, pupils respond well, but this practice is not consistent throughout the school. The pupils have the opportunity to use the 'Sanctuary' for periods of quiet reflection. This is very popular and used sensibly by pupils of all age groups. Whole school Masses are celebrated regularly in school and pupils play a full part in the preparation. The Mass observed during the inspection was a joyous and prayerful celebration. It was well prepared and there was full participation by all pupils. The large number of parishioners, parents and other family members present, added to the richness of the occasion. Parish and school collaborate closely in the Sacramental preparation programme, and the parents are fully involved.

Grade 2

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

The level of skill and knowledge of pupils on entry to the school is broadly average. They make good progress during this time in school and by the time they reach Year 6 are generally producing work of a high standard. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a good religious vocabulary and they are able to talk fluently about their work in Religious Education. They know a range of stories from the Bible and have a good understanding of the life and teaching of Jesus. Their knowledge about Advent was exceptionally good. By Year 6, pupils have a good knowledge of their faith and can talk confidently and fluidly. However, they were less confident when talking about the Bible and its stories. They showed a good knowledge of prayers and their significance. The favourite prayer for one pupil was the 'Glory be to the Father' as he found it a 'calm prayer.'

The pupils behaved and worked well in the lessons observed and were happy to contribute their thoughts and answers. However, there are some inconsistencies in the standards and quantity of work produced that need to be addressed. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is clearly rooted in the teachings of Jesus and the beliefs of the Catholic Church. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong and the school provides very well for their moral development.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good with some areas of excellent practice. Teaching Assistants are used effectively to support pupils learning. Teachers use a good range of different teaching styles to meet the needs of the pupils, including the use of interactive white boards. In the best lessons there was a high level of oral challenge with the emphasis on independent learning skills. Drama was skilfully used in one lesson resulting in the full involvement of all pupils. These were very good links to PSHE. However, some lessons lacked pace and there was lack of challenge for pupils, particularly the more able. Overall, pupils enjoy their learning, are interested and work well.

The marking of pupils work is positive and in some classes developmental. Assessment takes place at the end of a topic but as yet these assessments are not used for future planning.

The school's provision for spiritual development through prayer and collective worship is very good. Moral development is excellent. All pupils show respect for each other and the adults with whom they come into contact.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The curriculum in Religious Education is well planned and meets the needs and interests of learners. The school follows the approved Diocesan Schemes for Religious Education. The time allocation for Religious Education needs to be revised to ensure that all classes meet the 10% requirements of the Bishop's Conference. The school has a good Sex and Relationship Policy that follows the Diocesan guidelines. It is supported by the parish priest who puts relationships into a Catholic perspective. The school nurse also takes sessions with the older pupils on puberty. Other faiths are well covered within the curriculum and the older pupils showed a very good knowledge of previous work they had covered on Judaism.

Pupils of all abilities are able to make progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding and are aware of how Jesus' teaching should impact upon their everyday lives. They are encouraged to use their God given talents for the benefit of others and are keen to help those in need by prayer and actions. The school supports many charities, including: CAFOD and Children in Need. The pupils responded generously to the Christmas Shoe Box Appeal. They also link with the parish S.V.P. to support children affected by the recent Tsunami in Asia.

Curriculum provision in Religious Education makes a very good contribution to the pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

Religious Education is led and managed by the Headteacher who has a very clear vision for the subject. She supports the staff in their delivery of the subject and has carried out some classroom observations in the past, and plans to carry out regular monitoring in the future. The school benefits from a high percentage of Catholic teachers, half of whom hold a Religious Education qualification.

Accommodation is good with very attractive prayer areas in each class and vibrant RE displays around the school. The 'Sanctuary' is a beautiful room set aside for quiet reflection. Resources for Religious Education are adequate but there is an acknowledgement that more need to be purchased.

The governors effectively discharge their responsibilities for leadership and management of Religious Education.

Grade 2