



INSPECTION REPORT

The Catholic School of Saint Gregory the Great

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Headteacher: Mrs Sharon Aston
Chair of Governors: Mrs Nicky Febery

Date of inspection: 27th and 30th March 2007
Date of previous inspection: 1st and 2nd July 2002

Reporting Inspector: Mr P Bates

Description of School

The Catholic school of Saint Gregory The Great is a large and popular school situated in the centre of Cheltenham. There are 396 pupils on role of whom 71% are baptised Catholics. This percentage has been decreasing over the past few years but is set to increase from next September. The school mainly serves the parishes of St. Gregory the Great and Sacred Hearts, however, a significant number of pupils travel from further a field. Pupils entering the school come from a wide socio-economic mix and their attainment on entry is average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average but there are an increasing number of pupils learning English as an additional language. The large two storey building is being extended at present, to provide additional accommodation including a large staff room and work area

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St Gregory's is a satisfactory Catholic school with some good features. It has a strong caring ethos and is well supported by the governors, parish and parents. Pupils are nurtured in their faith in a safe, happy and caring environment where all are respected. Their spiritual and moral development is evident in their positive attitudes and good behaviour. Prayer has a central role in the everyday life of the school. Religious Education is treated as a core subject and is at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school. The Headteacher and Deputy Head lead the school very well and they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and development needs.

Grade 3

Improvement since the last inspection

Good progress has been made on the issues raised at the time of the last inspection. The time allocated to the teaching of Religious Education has been thoroughly reviewed and now meets the 10% requirement. The 'Here I am' programme has been implemented fully throughout the school. There is regular monitoring of plans, lesson observations are carried out and work scrutinies are undertaken by the Religious Education coordinators. There are now RE areas in all classrooms and resources have been purchased to facilitate this. These areas now need to be used more regularly as a focus during class lessons and acts of worship.

Grade 2

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

Priorities for improvement of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school are derived from the school's comprehensive and accurate self evaluation, which was completed with input from all staff and governors. The new leadership team are implementing plans for the future and continuing to build on the firm foundations that are being laid. There is a strong commitment and unity of purpose among the Senior Leadership Team and governors, which promises continued improvement. This is reflected in the Religious Education Action Plan.

Grade 2

What the school should do to improve further

- 1 Continue to monitor teaching and learning regularly to ensure standards are consistent throughout the school
- 2 Provide a greater challenge for more able pupils by providing a greater range and complexity of activities
- 3 Further develop the religious education programme in relation to the teaching of other faiths

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 effectively. They take their role of monitoring and evaluating all aspects of school life very seriously. The chair and link RE governor visit the school regularly to meet with the head and senior leadership team, they also observe lessons to ensure they have a good understanding of the quality of provision and performance. The Mission Statement is reviewed annually by staff and governors and the values it promotes can be seen in all aspects of school life.

The head and deputy head share the leadership of the subject and give clear direction for the school in its Catholic and academic life and its provision for Religious Education. This year they have established effective systems for the monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education and all aspects of school life. There is a striving for improvement to meet the needs of the pupils and provide an environment which promotes the strong Catholic ethos of the school.

Grade 2

The Prayer Life of the School

Provision for prayer is good. There is a variety of opportunity for prayer and worship throughout the school and this contributes significantly to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. They pray regularly each day, before and after meals and during Religious Education lessons. Pupils generally respond with respect and reverence. Pupils have opportunities for taking part in the

liturgical life of the school through key stage and class masses as well as a variety of non-Eucharistic liturgies. Many of these are enhanced by singing and music provided by the school orchestra. The reconciliation service observed during the inspection was of a high standard. It was confidently led by the year 6 pupils and was a reflective and prayerful celebration. Parish and school collaborate closely in the sacramental preparation programme and involve parents fully. There is a regular programme of differing styles of assemblies led by both staff and pupils.

Grade 2

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is average and by the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils achieve the expected levels of attainment. There is a need for the whole school to explore and develop the planning and delivery of the curriculum to ensure consistency in all classes. There was evidence of a lack of differentiation in the tasks set. The more able pupils, in particular, could be challenged to achieve a higher standard. In Key Stage 1 the level of oral work is very good offering many opportunities for speaking and listening. Music and Drama were used effectively to illustrate the Easter story in one class. As the pupils move through the school they show an increasing knowledge of the teaching of the Catholic Church and are encouraged to apply this to their own lives and experience. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The written work is generally well presented showing a variety of recording strategies. The pupils complete the 'Here I am' assessment sheets but the school is developing its own assessments that will aid future planning. Pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons and in those observed they behaved, worked well and made suitable contributions.

Grade 3

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, which matches the school's view. Lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. In the most successful lessons the learning objective was made clear to the pupils, the lessons were effectively presented, a variety of methods and resources used and were well paced. Interactive whiteboards were successfully used to support the learning. The activities planned consolidated the learning and all pupils were able to access the work, although there was little evidence of differentiation. Teaching assistants were used effectively to support the learning. Good marking gave praise to ideas and effort and at times led pupils to know how they could improve. Pupils have a secure understanding of the life and teaching of Jesus and are able to apply this teaching to their own lives and experiences.

Grade 3

Quality of the Curriculum

The curriculum programme is followed across the school in line with the 'Here I am' scheme of work. Religious Education is treated as a core subject and receives 10% of curriculum time. Following consultations with governors and parents the Personal Relationship Programme 'In the Beginning' has been introduced and is beginning to have an impact on the pupils' thinking and attitudes. All teaching and support staff are able to contribute to the teaching of religious education. At present only three staff have the Catholic Teachers Certificate but the school recognises the importance of ensuring staff have the benefit of additional training and there are plans to send eight teachers on the diocesan five day modular course. There is at least one In Service day per year given over to Religious Education, but this year there will be two. The second will be on the topic of teaching other faiths. This is an area recognised by the school that needs further development and additional resources. Good cross curricular links are in place especially with Art, Music and Drama. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively throughout the school to enhance the teaching. Pupils develop their understanding of the needs of others through supporting a wide range of charities. During the period of inspection, three members of staff raised a large amount of money for CLIC by having their heads shaved. This was in support of a pupil who has cancer and has lost her hair as a result of the treatment. The school is inclusive and ensures equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. This is shown in the way the large numbers of non-English speaking pupils are integrated into the school. Curriculum provision in Religious Education makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Grade 3

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The headteacher and deputy headteacher together with the senior leadership team are committed to a shared vision for the future development of Religious Education. The Deputy Head has written a clear Action Plan which is beginning to have a positive impact on standards in the school. Planning is monitored topic by topic and lessons are observed by one of the coordinators, who also attends class assemblies and masses. Governors are well informed about Religious Education developments through visits and reports by the coordinators. The provision for Religious Education is held in high regard by the parents, particularly for the values it teaches to their children, but they would like more information on the work their children are doing.

Grade 2