

+



INSPECTION REPORT

St Louis Catholic Primary School

Welshmill Lane, Frome, Somerset BA 11 3 AP
Telephone: 01373 463728
E-mail address: office@st-louisrc.somerset.sch.uk

D/ES Number: 933/3371

Headteacher: Mr R Triggs
Chair of Governors: Mr C Parsons

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: 8 – 9th January 2007
Date of previous inspection: 12th – 13th March 2002

Reporting Inspector: Mrs M Foster

Description of School

St Louis Catholic Primary School serves the parish of St Catharine's, in the market town of Frome. It serves a wide catchment area within the town and its outlying villages from which parents are willing to transport their children. There are 157 families who come from a wide variety of backgrounds, assessed by Experion to be more stable than the national average.

There are 213 pupils on roll, almost equally balanced in terms of gender. Sixty-six percent of pupils come from a Catholic background. The school is popular and oversubscribed. Recently four children have joined the school from Eastern Europe and have English as an additional language (EAL)

Attainment on entry varies between cohorts and the 2005 intake was slightly above the County average. There are 9.6% pupils on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register and one child has a statement of SEN. The number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below the national average and the number has declined over the past three years. There has been an increase in the number of children needing speech and language support.

The school has targeted attendance and it has improved, to be above the national average.

At the time of the inspection the school was six months into an extensive building programme which should take 15 months to complete, but is already behind schedule.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

The leadership of the headteacher is strong. He has a clear vision of what it is to be a good Catholic school which is shared by governors, teachers and parents. Religious education (RE) has been the focus for school development and this has led to significant improvement in standards. The Governing body has recently been restructured and is now in a good position to contribute strong support to the school's development.

The school is being re-modelled and this has led to much daily disruption and inconvenience. Throughout, the headteacher has worked with staff to maintain stability and a positive day-to-day attitude, emphasising the ultimate benefits from the building programme.

The school's ethos is distinctively and clearly Catholic with its values and beliefs evident in its every day life. The leaders and all the staff, teaching and support staff, contribute strongly to the quality of the Catholic life of the school, by their example and commitment. The parents and pupils identified the consistent high quality of care for individuals as a major feature of the school community. Parents have a very high regard for the school, the leadership of the headteacher and the hard work and commitment of the staff.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel valued, as one pupil put it, "*Teachers are really caring so if you have a problem, there's always someone to go to.*"

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

At the time of the last inspection, the school had recently adopted the national RE programme "Here I am". Since then teachers and management have become familiar with its content, grown in confidence and have integrated it effectively into their ways of working. Good quality resources have been developed and support pupils' learning.

RE now has the same status as other core subjects: its funding has increased and it is part of the school's monitoring programme, included in the School Improvement Plan.

The systems for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress are the focus for school development and are already having a positive impact on pupils' learning.

The time allocated for the teaching of RE is in line with the Diocesan requirements.

A new policy and programme of study were adopted for Education for personal relationships and sex relationship education (EPR and SRE) by the Governors in 2005. The programmes of study have useful links to other subjects in the curriculum. The parents of Year 6 pupils are consulted annually about the programme and there are plans to extend these consultations.

Grade 2

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The strong leadership of the headteacher, the re-structuring of the governors, and the support of staff and parents, places the school in a good position to improve.

RE is a priority area for development. Much innovative and exciting work has been introduced under the guidance of the enthusiastic subject leader, who has the trust and support of the headteacher, governors and her colleagues.

The school's systems of self-evaluation are developing steadily and being refined to bring about and support improved practice. All teachers are involved in self-evaluation through the shared scrutiny of work; analysing good examples of marking and discussing classroom practice at staff meetings and in-service days.

The re-modelling of the school through its current building programme will provide a greatly enhanced learning environment and reflect in a direct way the value the school places on each member of its community, pupils and adults alike.

Grade 2

What the school should do to improve further

The school has identified areas for improvement which this inspection has confirmed. These include:

- developing further the systems for assessment, especially pupils' self-assessment, so that there is a consistent whole school approach;

- taking forward the work of the re-structured governing body, including developing further the role of the RE link governor, and
 - continuing to share good practice through a formal system to further raise standards of teaching in RE.
-

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The principal aim of the headteacher is the development of the ethos of the school. His vision of the school with Christ at its centre is shared by the whole school community, including the children, who understand the purpose of the Christian Catholic School.

The re-structuring of the governors is resulting in closer relationships between governors and staff and a better understanding of mutual responsibilities. RE continues to be a high priority for both governors and staff contributing to pupils' good progress. The carefully thought-out Action Plan makes clear the priorities for school improvement and the actions necessary to implement them.

The Catholic mission of the school is underpinned by the example of the headteacher and staff all of whom act as good role models and some of whom are Eucharistic ministers. Pupils have explicit responsibilities for caring for each other. Good systems are in place to develop pupils' leadership skills. The Red Hats scheme trains Year 6 children to initiate games with younger children and interact with them at an appropriate level. This understanding of responsibility is evident throughout the school with pupils learning to apply the second commandment of loving each other for Christ's sake. As one pupil who had joined the school in year 5, explained: "I didn't know what to expect- coming to a Catholic school, but I found everyone was really kind and they helped me."

Pupils from every age group work creatively together in *Family Groups* on a religious theme for one day each half-term. This provides a significant opportunity for pupils to work with older and younger children, learning to know and support each other within a caring and inclusive community. One very obvious outcome is the friendly social interaction of children of different ages at playtimes, building social confidence and shared values. The school council contributes to pupils' understanding of simple democracy and to their sense of self-worth through being listened to.

Pupils are encouraged to think about other people's needs. In their response to the *Make Poverty History* campaign, the school choir recorded a song written by one of the teachers, raising money for CAFOD as well as going to the Houses of Parliament to sing it. This brought well deserved recognition to the teacher, pupils and the school.

Good links have been developed with parents, the parish and the wider community to successfully support the work of the school. Mass is celebrated regularly in the parish church and in school to reinforce the close their connection. Shared liturgical activities such as the *Gospel Singing Day* bring together all partners in the life of the school, confirming their sense of community and common purpose.

The Prayer Life of the School

Spirituality is a strength of the school. Where practice is best, it is developed through the time given to reflective prayer and through opportunities for pupils to be creative in their work. This approach is not, as yet, consistent through the school. In one year group carefully chosen examples of work, relating to the wonder of God's creation, are given depth and meaning by the addition of pupils' prayers. Creative activity is also used as an inspiration to pray, for example, the making of clay pots gave an opportunity for year 3 pupils to reflect on the process in poetic form.

The prayer life of the school is enriched by retreats for both staff and pupils. On one such retreat at Ammerdown, the school, led by the subject leader, encouraged children to develop their sense of God in their daily lives and stressed the importance of prayer and ways to pray. It also gave them time to reflect on the beauties of the natural world as they observed them in a forest school and on a prayer walk involving sketching and photography. Such imaginative approaches strongly influence children's perceptions of themselves and the world in which they live and for which they are stewards.

Opportunities to reflect and pray are a feature of the school year. Year 5 have a residential retreat to deepen an awareness of their relationship with God and each other. A pupil stated that initially he had felt unsure about going, but that he felt that he had "grown from the experience."

The leadership of RE recognises that the need to grow in spirituality is not something confined simply to pupils. Its status is sufficiently high to require that a day's Inset on prayer be attended by teachers. This was so successful that future in-service will also include support staff.

Staff and pupils pray together. Pupils learn the taught prayers of the Church and are also encouraged to pray extemporaneously. Children are listened to. For example, one of the issues brought to the notice of the School Council was a request to change the taught grace before and after meals to one which the pupils themselves composed. The celebration of Mass is planned for in the annual calendar. Pupils are closely involved in the liturgy, reading, singing and playing musical instruments with staff. Parents and parishioners are involved in the celebration and witness to the wider community of the Church.

Collective worship has been adversely affected by the current building works. There is no longer a school hall so whole school assemblies cannot take place on site. Despite this, the headteacher and staff walk the pupils for fifteen minutes to the Parish Hall. The importance of meeting and praying together gives continuity of purpose to the school community. The significance of this action was commented on by a year 6 pupil, "Mr Triggs didn't say to himself, 'Oh well, no school assembly then', he realised it was important so he walks us to St Catharine's Hall!"

The school meets its statutory obligation.

Grade 2

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Most pupils achieve good standards and make good progress, especially those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. There is some variation in standards but most teachers have high expectations which are met by their pupils.

The focus on speaking and listening has contributed to pupils' growing ability to express their thoughts and improve their learning in RE. Pupils take pride in their work achieving standards broadly in line with their achievement in literacy, which is above the national average.

The school makes effective use of the Diocesan programme "Here I am ". The use of levels of attainment is still at an early stage but is in place, and will inform the pupil's next teacher of their attainment at the end of the academic year.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Overall the quality of teaching and learning in the three lessons observed was good. Pupils enjoy RE and are motivated to learn. A calm, quiet sharing of the learning objectives established the purpose of the lesson and a climate for reflective learning. Planning was well-organised and the lessons well-structured with appropriate pace and challenge, building on prior learning. Teaching assistants were used effectively to support the less able pupils who made good progress. In two of the three lessons, tasks were well differentiated with a degree of challenge for the more able and support for the less.

Pupils' confidence in expressing themselves contributed to their own and each others' learning. This was particularly effective when individual children addressed the class where they were listened to with attention and respect. Pupils' good behaviour aided their learning and freed the teacher to focus on learning outcomes rather than behaviour management

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) was evident in teachers' planning and pupils reported their enjoyment of using the interactive whiteboards. None was in evidence in the lessons observed, though in one class the interactive whiteboard (IWB) had been removed and was in a new classroom.

Teachers use oral assessments to group pupils and encourage them to assess their own learning using mind maps or "What I now know" statements at the end of a unit. Time is allocated so that pupils can reflect on their own learning and take responsibility for it. These processes are relatively new and not yet fully embedded in all teachers' practice. To continue this development, the subject leader has organised staff meetings where teachers share scrutiny of work and further issues to be addressed. Examples of good marking are also shared by staff to promote consistency throughout the school.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The curriculum follows the national programme of "Here I am", supplemented by the school's own focus and activities to promote RE teaching and learning. All pupils are able to progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Great emphasis is placed on developing pupils' spirituality and on the importance of putting their faith into practice in their every day lives. The curriculum in RE contributes well to the pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils learn to respect the beliefs of others through studying other major world faiths.

Literacy skills are effectively developed through RE as is music and drama. Links with other subjects such as art, enrich the learning curriculum. Before the building work began there were 19 clubs operating to expand pupils' learning and social opportunities. Many of these have, understandably, had to be curtailed on account of the building work.

The curriculum for the Foundation Stage pupils is suitable for young children. It is effectively supported by a good range of resources some of which are made by the teacher and teaching assistant. In the Foundation Stage good procedures are put in place for pupil induction and liaison with parents. These include interesting and informative workshops which help parents to understand what the school is doing and how they can support their children. These activities lay important foundations for later relationships.

During the inspection there was not much ICT in evidence. This is explained to some extent by the disruption caused by the building work. There are at present limited opportunities for pupils to use ICT to enhance their learning as each class has only two computers. This should be rectified with the installation of an ICT suite as part of the school's re-modelling.

Grade 3

Leadership and management of Religious Education

RE is led and managed well. The headteacher and senior management team are committed to ensuring the central importance of RE in the life of the school. The subject leader is dedicated to raising achievement in RE, and gives clear direction and support for teaching and to wider aspects such as the staff and pupil retreats.

The procedures in place for planning and assessment effectively support the teaching and learning, contributing to pupils' good achievement. Some of the assessments procedures are relatively recent and are being monitored by the headteacher and subject leader. This committed and enthusiastic leadership should help teachers in developing common practice.

Future priorities for developments in RE are agreed with Governors and form part of the school's Action Plan. There is a strong focus on school improvement, and developing the ethos of the school is central to its mission.

Grade 2