



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **ST. GEORGE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The Mount, Taunton, Somerset TA1 3NR

Telephone: 01823 284130

e-mail address: [sch.351@educ.somerset.gov.uk](mailto:sch.351@educ.somerset.gov.uk)

DfES Number: 933/3438

Headteacher: Mr P Hanratty  
Chair of Governors: Mr V Kearney

---

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: 17th –18th October 2006  
Date of previous inspection: 28th-30<sup>th</sup> November 2000

Reporting Inspector: Mrs M Foster

## **Description of School**

St George's Catholic Primary School serves a wide catchment area which includes the parishes of St George, St Teresa and St John Fisher. Parents are prepared to transport their children by car, even from considerable distances. The families who attend the school are from a broad mix of social, academic and economic backgrounds.

There are 197 pupils on roll, almost equally balanced in terms of gender. A high percentage (81%) of these are Catholic. In recent years the number of children entering the school with English as a second language has increased, as Filipino and Polish families join the community.

The entitlement to free meals is greater than the number who exercises it, with only 3 children claiming their entitlement. A much larger number of pupils are supported financially for school trips, uniform and transport costs.

No pupil has a statement of Special Educational Need. Approximately 11% of pupils are on the school's special educational needs register.

The school site is fortunate to have green fields, a small adventure playground with plans for development and three playgrounds which enable the Foundation Stage pupils to have a dedicated, secure area for outdoor provision. The new swimming-pool and gymnasium are a prestigious addition to the school facilities. The school is next to St George's Church and the Parish Centre. The town Library, the County Museum and the town's theatre are all within walking distance.

### **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 school is very strong. The Headteacher leads by example and has established a common understanding of the school's mission which is supported by the whole school community. Governors are well-informed and fully committed to the continuing development of the school.

The positive ethos pervades every level of the school's activity and its relationships. It contributes to the pupils' enjoyment of school and their sense of belonging to a community. Pupils are proud of their school and speak well of the staff, especially of the Headteacher. As one pupil said, "I love everything about this school, but most of all I love the way Mr Hanratty and the teachers take care of us". The way in which their children are valued contributes significantly to parents' confidence in the school.

Teaching in the lessons observed was good, resulting in pupils making good progress. The school knows itself well, both its strengths and areas for development and has a very good capacity to improve.

Standards of learning in Religious education (RE) are good.

**Grade 2**

## **Improvement since the last inspection**

The lack of sufficient resources for RE identified in the previous inspection has been addressed. Both the quantity and quality of resources have improved considerably. Specific funding has been identified and the school is committed to raising the status of RE to that of the other core subjects. Advice from the diocese has been instrumental in furthering school improvement.

**Grade 1**

## **The capacity of the school community to improve and develop**

The leadership of the school is fully committed to rigorous self-evaluation. Governors and staff, led by the recently formed RE team, have identified the areas where the school needs to improve. As a result, some systems are already in place and others are being developed to ensure the raising of standards in teaching and learning.

All teachers are involved in self-evaluation through a shared scrutiny of work, staff meetings and in-service. The planned programme of lesson observations, which has been started, should enhance this process. Given the leadership of the Headteacher and governors and the implementation of the action plan by the RE team and staff, the school is in a strong position to implement the improvement it needs to make.

**Grade 1**

## **What the school should do to improve further**

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

- continuing to monitor RE lessons and work towards extending the role of the RE co-ordinator through the lesson observation programme;
- developing assessment strategies to include ways in which pupils can assess for themselves how they can improve their own work;
- extending the model of interactive marking, established in at least one key stage 2 class, to the rest of the Key Stage, and
- continuing to develop the end of unit assessments and to use the level descriptions

---

## **The Catholic Life of the School**

### **Leadership and Management**

The leadership of the school has a clear vision of their Catholic mission that informs and influences the life of the school at all levels. Governors, the Senior Management team and staff, are committed to this vision, encapsulated in the school's mission statement which explains clearly how its aspirations are turned into practice in the everyday life of the school. Governors are closely involved in the life of the school, fulfilling their responsibilities in relation to the school's Catholic foundation.

There is a strong sense of co-operation. Leaders provide positive models of what it is to be a Catholic Christian. The RE team promotes this concept in their professional and personal commitment. Some teachers show a commitment to their faith by acting as Eucharistic ministers and lay-readers.

Successes and strengths are celebrated and areas for development identified and included in future action planning. Assemblies and liturgical events and activities consistently foster pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The good quality health, safety and well-being of all pupils are the result of a highly organised, well thought out and systematic approach involving a whole school audit of "Every Child Matters". Inclusion and the need to ensure equality of opportunity for each pupil is a central tenet of the school. The high standard of care, guidance and support reflects the value of each child, created in the image of God.

Good links have been established, principally by the Headteacher, with parents, parishes and external agencies to support the work of the school. In consequence, pupils are confident learners and put their trust in the ability of the school to help them progress and stay safe.

**Grade 2**

## **The Prayer Life of the School**

Prayer is central to the life of the school. The pupils and staff pray together, using the taught prayers of the Church and pupils' spontaneous prayers. Class books and a whole school book of prayers written by the pupils are examples of faith and hope, expressed from the heart and witness to the trust the pupils have in the power of God to hear and answer them.

The quality of collective worship is good and all statutory requirements are met. One class-based liturgy observed was led by the class teacher with pupils participating in a reverential and respectful way. As part of the liturgy the teacher posed the question "Who is God?" and the responses were profound. It was an opportunity for reflection and the balance between prayers composed and read by the pupils, music and silence contributed to the pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Class assemblies shared with the whole school are an important part of collective worship building on a sense of shared values and beliefs. As class assemblies are linked to units from "Here I Am", they provide a model of peer teaching in an engaging way, helping pupils to learn from each other. In addition, they are used by teachers to assess what their pupils know, understand and can do, in terms of their learning.

Further, since the school's approach to studying "Here I Am" is Route 2, there are always two classes learning the same unit, but at different levels. In this way, the older pupils are able to demonstrate progression in knowledge and understanding, as well as having an opportunity to consolidate their previous learning.

Collective worship is of good quality. Pupils are responsive to each other and show interest and engagement in each other's presentations. Pupils are involved in planning assemblies but do not take responsibility for directing their own liturgies. The strong sense of community involvement and enjoyment facilitates pupils' learning through observing their peers.

The RE Link governor, who is the parish priest, strengthens the home-school-parish link by celebrating Mass in the school hall, the Parish Centre or St George's Church. The parents and parishioners are invited and their involvement sets a good example for pupils and reinforces the shared values of a worshipping community. It also places the Mass at the centre of the prayer community.

The RE governor supports the RE teaching by visiting classes to lead liturgies providing direct learning opportunities for pupils. His membership of the Learning Effectiveness Committee is thereby informed by first hand insights into the way the school operates.

**Grade 2**

## **Religious Education**

### **Achievement and Standards in Religious Education**

Most pupils achieve good standards and make good progress, including those with English as an additional language (EAL) and pupils with special educational needs (SEN).

Standards are similar to those in literacy and are supported by pupils' ability to express themselves well orally.

The very good behaviour of the pupils contributes strongly to their learning and allows the teachers to focus on their acquisition of knowledge and understanding rather than behaviour management.

Scrutiny of work shows that they make good progress over time and from year to year.

**Grade 2**

### **Teaching and learning in Religious Education**

Overall the quality of teaching and learning in the three lessons observed was good. A productive climate for learning was established by quiet but effective introductions of the learning objectives by the class teacher. In one case the learning objectives were written on the interactive whiteboard (IWB) and read aloud so that the pupils were clear about what they were expected to learn.

Teachers revisited previous learning so that pupils could recall what they knew and more readily understand new learning. Pupils were interested in answering questions, especially when it involved them in using the IWB to investigate different ways of explaining and extending what they knew. Teachers confirmed pupils' correct responses, expanded them to further understanding and praised pupils for their efforts.

In two classes pupils' personal experience was used to enhance the learning and relate it to experience in the wider world. Good quality images through the IWB were effective in engaging pupils' attention and sustaining it. In another lesson, they provided a vivid stimulus for group drama, well supported by the use of poetry. Drama was also the successful medium for a younger class to learn about the sacrament of Baptism. Good use of a teaching assistant to support the drama, gave the learners an opportunity to work in a small group, extend their social skills and improve their speaking and listening.

Teachers used assessment effectively to judge the pace of the lesson. Well directed questions retained pupils' interest and succeeded in challenging the more able. The plenary sessions at the end of the lessons observed, confirmed that the learning objectives had been met.

Regular assessment is carried out at the end of each "Here I Am" unit to ascertain individual pupils' progress and attainment. Methods of tracking pupils' progress over the longer term are currently being considered as part of the school's Improvement Plan.

**Grade 2**

### **Quality of the Curriculum**

Additional funding for resources and training, the hard work of the RE team and staff, supported by Governors is transforming RE into the same high quality learning area as, for example, English. The full implementation of the Improvement Plan will take time, but the school has a clear vision of how it will be done and has begun the process. Each pupil's level in RE is recorded alongside English, Mathematics and Science and is passed to the next class teacher at the end of the academic year. The analysis of this process will be improved standards of teaching and learning.

Multiculturalism has been a focus for work shared across the Taunton Learning Partnership, enriching the pupils' learning opportunities. It is also a public extension of the school's strong ethos of respecting other faiths and cultures.

The curriculum for the Foundation Stage pupils is age appropriate and resources such as digital photographs of themselves for the "Beginnings" unit provides affirmation of the value of each individual, important at the start of their schooling. The range of visitors representing a variety of services and professions expands their learning opportunities.

Information and communication technology (ICT) provision has made a positive impact on learners and their attitudes to learning. Using a range of websites presents a new range of skills to be learned and opens a vast number of new learning opportunities e.g. tour of a synagogue or a mosque. Digital photographs have improved standards of displays and are also used to create story boards for less able children, with a gain in their self-esteem. PowerPoint presentations have raised the level of teaching by engaging pupils' interest and giving them opportunities to be more interactive in their learning. It is also used at the celebration of Mass in the school hall, helping to focus pupils' attention on the prayers and hymns and thereby increasing their reverence.

Pupils regard learning involving ICT as fun, and being emotionally motivated, are more effective learners.

The use of the creative arts and a well-planned and organised curriculum contributes strongly to the learning of pupils.

**Grade 2**

### **Leadership and management of Religious Education**

The Headteacher has led the move to raise the status of RE to that of the other core subjects with energy and enthusiasm. The creation of the RE team comprising two members of the Senior Management team, the RE Co-ordinator and the RE Link Governor has helped to raise the status of RE.

**Grade 2**

The RE Co-ordinator is effective in her management of the subject, setting an example of hard work, clear organisation and very good support for her colleagues.

The good practice of both RE Co-ordinator and Deputy Head add significantly to the strength of RE teaching in the school – leading by example. The focus on raising standards applies to all staff and systems and policies are in place to ensure future school improvement. For example, the scrutiny of work involved all teachers who shared each others insights and evaluated their own practice. This model will be used again to embed self-evaluation into school improvement.

Priorities for RE are agreed with Governors through the Learning Effectiveness Committee and form part of the resulting Action Plan.

**Grade 2**