



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

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

The Mount  
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URN: 123851  
D/ES Number: 933/3438

Headteacher: Mr Peter Hanratty  
Chair of Governors: Mr Vincent Kearney

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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

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Date of inspection: 29 - 30 September 2009  
Date of previous inspection: 17 -18 October 2006  
Reporting Inspector: Mrs Maisie Foster

## **Description of School**

St George's Catholic School serves the parishes of St George, St Teresa and St John Fisher. The school attracts pupils from a wide area and some pupils travel considerable distances to school. Families are from a wide range of socio-economic, cultural and backgrounds.

There are 209 pupils on roll, almost equally balanced in gender terms. The number of pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) is above that nationally. No pupil currently has a statement of Special Educational Need (SEN). The number of pupils with SEN is lower than the national average.

The number of pupils who are entitled to the provision of free school meals (FSM) is below the national average.

There is an increasing trend of rising numbers of Catholic children joining the school. This is due in part to the growing numbers of Polish and Filipino families joining the community. 88% of all pupils are Catholic, with 97% in this year's Reception class intake.

### **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

All aspects of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. RE is very well planned, taught and evaluated. Leaders and managers are seriously focused on maintaining the outstanding profile of their school through consistent self-evaluation, supported by effective procedures for school improvement. The whole school community shares a common vision of the school's mission and all contribute to its fulfilment.

**Grade 1**

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

At the previous inspection this school was judged to be good. It is now outstanding.

The issues from the previous Section 48 inspection focussed on the points listed below.

- 1. Continuing to monitor Religious Education (RE) lessons working towards extending the role of the RE Co-ordinator through lesson observations*

The role of the RE Co-ordinator has been extended to include the monitoring of teachers' planning; assessment; Acts of Collective Worship and assemblies; auditing resources and staff training needs. She has also supported the induction of three new teachers into the school since the previous inspection. Her new role as acting Deputy Head will facilitate a further expansion as appropriate.

- 2. Developing strategies to include ways in which pupils can assess for themselves how they can improve their own work.*

The school has worked hard to develop strategies for pupils to assess their own work, including mind-mapping, brainstorming and end of unit assessments. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on their acquisition of skills and use end of year reflections on their growth and development in line with the Mission Statement which includes growth of mind, body and spirit.

- 3. Extending the model of interactive marking, established in at least one Key Stage 2 class, to the rest of the key stage.*

Since the previous inspection two out of the four Key Stage 2 teachers are new to the school. They are using an interactive approach but it is still developing and represents work in progress. Younger pupils do usefully discuss the issues from their work with their teachers.

- 4. Continuing to develop the end of unit assessments and to use the level descriptions.*

The end of unit assessments are used regularly and effectively alongside the new level descriptors. The process is effectively monitored and evaluated by the RE Co-ordinator.

**Grade 1**

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

The dynamic headteacher, supported by an inspiring and hard-working RE Co-ordinator ensures a coherent and vibrant approach to school improvement. Governors are well informed and well-organised, thus able to act decisively to support and challenge. Staff share ambitious goals and are clear about the school's priorities. The will to be the best they can be for the sake of the pupils, and in the name of Jesus, ensures that this school has a continuing capacity to develop and maintain its excellent provision.

**Grade 1**

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

- Continue to develop the model of interactive marking
- Embed the revised levels of attainment within the school's electronic system to enable the tracking of pupils' progress, in line with other core subjects

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

### **Leadership and Management**

This school proclaims its Catholicity in every aspect of its life, with a confidence and pride that is its essential way of operating. All leaders and managers share a view of Christ at the centre of their school. The Governors are keenly aware of their responsibilities to Catholic education as the Bishop's representatives. Governors are well organised with systems to ensure that they know about and are involved in the promotion of school improvement, through visits and reviews of Action Plans and the School Development Plan (SDP). The shared vision encapsulated in the school's Mission Statement of developing each individual child in mind, body and spirit, informs decisions made at every level. The high quality of relationships results in a staff team strongly supportive of the school's leadership and of each other. The same attention to fostering positive relationships leads to a shared determination to ensure that every child is provided with the opportunity to succeed and to grow as a child of God, loved and valued within the school community. The whole school shares an understanding of what it means to have an active option for the poor.

Governors, the Senior Management Team (SMT) and staff provide excellent role models of service in the work of the Church. The Chair of Governors is a catechist for Confirmation and members of staff are Eucharistic ministers or Readers at Parish or school Masses, bearing public witness to the faith they share. The Headteacher is a member of the Parish Council, actively involved in decision making and seen by all as a dedicated supporter of parish life. The Deputy Headteacher is the Chair of St. Teresa's Parish Council. The commitment of the Parish Priest, who is the link governor for RE, facilitates good communication. He organises the programme of the school liturgies, including Masses, with the RE Co-ordinator for the whole year. On account of his close involvement with the school he is well-placed to liaise between school, parish and the Governing Body. He is also well-informed about the Catholic life of the school through his regular meetings with the RE Co-ordinator and his frequent visits to classes. This relationship also helps the development of close links between parish and school.

Governors, parents and parishioners support the school by being involved in its liturgical life, informing their view of the school as an effective worshipping community and themselves adding to its development. As a multicultural school, the Governors have ensured that its composition reflects the diversity of the community they serve.

The very experienced Headteacher and hard-working RE Co-ordinator lead by example and their enthusiasm and energy drive the agenda to strive for ever greater benefits for pupils. The appointment of the RE Co-ordinator as acting Deputy Head adds status to both posts. Parents are hugely aware and appreciative of the ethos of the school and the care it takes of their children. As one parent wrote: *"We believe in the ethos of the school, with its emphasis on spiritual as well as educational growth. It is a warm, friendly, happy school – children are nurtured here. We were warmly welcomed by the Headteacher. He and his staff greatly impressed us."*

### **Grade 1**

### **Collective Worship**

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school, as stated in the school prospectus. Acts of Collective Worship are well-planned and appropriate to the pupils' age, ability and interests. Pupils are encouraged to pray and they do. They are taught the formal prayers of the Church

and given many opportunities to pray spontaneously, from their earliest days in school. Children pray confidently for their families, friends and for the needs of the wider global community. They value their prayers: they present them well and use technology to enhance their presentation and are proud to share them with their class and the whole school. Teachers give great importance to the children's written prayers by making them into attractive books so that other pupils can further their spiritual development by reading and reflecting on them. The Headteacher reads from a book of pupils' prayers at every whole school Act of Worship, and so important are they, that, should he fail to do so, the children remind him!

Staff and pupils pray together as a worshipping community. Pupils pray with respect and reverence and are sometimes amazingly perceptive in their spiritual insights and thoughts. All pupils are included in the prayer life of the school in all its forms, personal and public.

Collective worship is given high status in the school. It is well planned for the year with the RE Co-ordinator, teachers and the RE link Governor, then reviewed and evaluated to ensure that it is vibrant and relevant. Parents' and pupils' opinions are sought and acted upon through questionnaires to ensure community involvement, with comments and articles published in the Parish magazine so as to reach the wider community.

Pupils develop personal skills of leadership and decision-making by taking responsibility for their own class and whole school worship. A variety of strategies, including information and communication technology (ICT), dance, drama, role-play, music and singing ensures breadth of experience to deepen spiritual development and further learning. A sense of excitement and enjoyment infuses this sharing of commonly held beliefs and values. The Year 6 pupils take increased responsibility as the oldest pupils in the school. By leading the celebration of Mass in the Parish Church as well as School Masses, doing the readings, composing and reading the Bidding Prayers, they provide role models for younger pupils to aspire to and move further on their own spiritual journeys.

A central part of the learning integral to a residential educational visit for Year 6 pupils is the spiritual dimension of planning the celebration of Mass while away from home and school.

**Grade 1**

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## **Community Cohesion**

The school has formally reviewed its role in promoting community cohesion and implements its policy to reach out to those in the wider community, near and far, informed by the knowledge that it is itself a community which strives to live and act according to Gospel values. Parents and visitors confirm that it is a warm, welcoming place where all are made to feel valued in the name of, and for the sake of Christ. Each individual whatever faith or culture is welcomed as a member of God's family. Equal opportunities are rightly given a high priority. Children who may need additional support are identified early so that barriers which might lessen their chances to succeed are removed. Consistent monitoring and evaluation ensure the continuity of appropriate support.

Pupils learn effectively about their world and their responsibility to care for it and its people. The wide range of fund-raising activities which pupils undertake, and in some cases initiate, testifies to this commitment. The cross-curricular approach to learning about global issues, such as inequality and injustice, leads to children developing skills in public speaking, writing,

reading, ICT, and team building. For example, Year 6 pupils researched the issues around fairly traded goods. They produced a PowerPoint presentation for the whole school, reinforcing their own learning while teaching others. Citizenship and living the Gospel message were the focus of Year 6 pupils then hosting two Fairtrade events, one for the other pupils and one for parents and friends. These involved games and activities alongside free tastings of fairly traded goods. The importance of the moral issues of Fair trade led them to use their skills of persuasive writing to write to the head teachers of local schools, enclosing a teabag, to persuade them to use fairly traded products. Pupils checked, of course that what they were advocating as social justice was also happening in the school's staffroom! Such a direct exercise teaches the important message that it is what we do more than what we say which makes us true followers of Christ. This is further reinforced by the wide range of charities supported by the school so that pupils are aware of local issues of homelessness and disadvantage as well as global issues. These include: Open Door for the homeless in Taunton; the Children's Hospice South-West; Father Danny's Mission in Peru and CAFOD. Pupils learn about the work of these charities from visits of representatives and can further their own learning by asking questions. History provides a way of learning what it would be like to live in conditions similar to those found in some developing countries. One representative from CAFOD has done some work on homes in Victorian times focusing on water. The pupils were able to draw out the parallels and reflect on the impact of the funds they raise on certain communities. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of citizenship is enriched through learning about the millennium goals; CAFOD's *'Living Simply'* campaign and the *'Our World'* project run by the Young Business Enterprise. Parents offer their support personally and financially, reinforcing the ethos of the school.

Pupils see themselves valued through the positive images of different cultures and customs displayed around the school. Images of people in need are addressed sensitively so that, while pupils understand the duties of the second commandment, care is taken by the adults to emphasise the similarities of world families rather than the differences. Pupils from other countries and cultures are given opportunities to develop confidence and increase their sense of belonging to a family. For example, at the celebration of Harvest Festival, which itself had a global theme, pupils carried large flags of different countries in solemn procession through the hall. There was an audible response from pupils and parents as they identified their own with visible pride. The personal and spiritual development of pupils is also prioritised through such activities as singing alternate verses of hymns in their mother tongue in whole school acts of worship. The high quality of music making and singing at class and whole school acts of worship contributes strongly to the spiritual development and social cohesion of the school community.

Pupils learn to respect other faiths through learning about them and the use of virtual reality tools of ICT which enable them to visit mosques, synagogues and Sikh temples to further their understanding. They are clear that learning about other people in search of truth reflects their own. As one Year 6 pupil stated: "It's interesting learning about other religions but carry on believing what you believe and respect other people's beliefs, then they will respect yours."

As the leading school in a number of partnerships between Primary and Secondary schools, the Headteacher promotes the Catholicity of the school by building links and providing mutual support. These links also benefit pupils directly in extending learning opportunities. For example, the Primary Strategy Learning Network, involving five other Primary schools, successfully bid for funding to provide challenges for able pupils in Mathematics. Transition of Year 6 pupils to secondary phase education is facilitated by the strong and effective links forged through projects such as a writing competition, PSHE and citizenship days. A range of curricular enhancement enriches the pupils' learning experience through sporting activities, ICT and DT projects, drama and dance, science and art projects, alongside pupils from other

schools. Significant support is given by the school to local students by offering them placements and many return to the school to acknowledge their debt.

The school acts as host to a number of schools and organisations, offering its considerable facilities for community use. The local football groups use the school field; educational and NHS groups use the swimming pool for groups with special needs and dance and yoga clubs use the school hall. The school also supports other schools by offering its sports facilities as a centre for staff development in the local area. It is a public way of sharing resources. Links with the local pre-school are strengthened as they also use the school field for their Sports Day and attend special school celebrations such as the Christmas Concert. Further community cohesion is fostered through invitations to the residents of a neighbouring residential home and of the Evergreen club to join in school celebrations and pupils learn to respect others from such liaisons.

The close links with the parish includes sharing the school facilities with parish groups and supporting parish appeals for funding. The Musical Extravaganza was not only a way of celebrating the talents of the school community with parents and parishioners, but part of the large sum of money it raised went to the two parish churches the school serves, and to the mission in Peru. Pupils were involved in the decision to share their good fortune with others. The school offered its premises for English classes for Polish families and have appointed a Polish teaching assistant to support Polish pupils and their families.

The Headteacher's reports to Governors always include the school's contribution to developing community cohesion so that they are well informed of the impact it has on the ethos in practice.

**Grade 1**

## **Religious Education**

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

Pupils achievement in RE is consistently good and in some cases excellent. Analysis of school data over time shows that pupils' attainment in the core subjects is significantly higher than national or local authority results.

On entry to school the attainment of pupils is in line with national expectations. Children make good progress in their first year in school and this is maintained as they move up through the school. Pupils with SEN or EAL make very good progress. Good systems of monitoring, both formal and informal, ensure that there is no underachievement.

Given their starting points, all pupils achieve well and make good progress. They have a good knowledge and understanding of their faith and can articulate their beliefs clearly and confidently, in ways appropriate to their age and ability. Pupils comprehend the implications of their beliefs for their every day behaviour and relationships.

Pupils have the skills to work independently and also develop skills of negotiation and decision – making, working collaboratively to become successful learners and responsible individuals.

**Grade 1**

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

Teaching is outstanding. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and lessons are well-planned and well-structured. Learning objectives are shared so that pupils are clear about what it is they are expected to know and understand by the end of the lesson. Teachers use a range of teaching approaches to ensure that pupils who learn in different ways are able to learn most effectively. They build on prior knowledge, introduce new learning in a structured, coherent way and assess in lessons what has been understood and assimilated by the pupils. Pace is brisk so that interest is sustained. Teachers use good questioning techniques to address any misconceptions, while challenging pupils to think more deeply. The routine use of ICT, particularly Smartboards, engages the pupils' interest and because it is enjoyable pupils stay on task and are motivated to learn. The use of photography to provide images for storyboards reinforces learning, as well as raising the levels of pupils' self-esteem.

Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour and pupils respond positively. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and any distraction is dealt with by teachers calmly and quietly so that learning is maximised. The very effective behaviour management strategies employed by teachers, supported by skilled Teaching Assistants, are impressive. Praise and encouragement reinforce the positive climate for learning. Pupils listen well to the adults and to each other so that ideas can be exchanged, problems shared and this co-operation results in successful learning.

The strong focus on creative and imaginative cross-curricular approaches in RE, contribute significantly to making learning enjoyable. Many of the learning outcomes are expressed through poetry, posters, stories, drama, dance or song and pupils are swift to say that they enjoy their learning. One class wrote their psalm on the theme of Creation and put it to music. Pupils have a positive attitude towards their learning in RE "...because it's learning about Jesus and bringing us closer to God." (Year 6 pupil)

In addition to effective assessment in lessons, including checking that theological vocabulary is understood and new concepts are accessible to all pupils, teachers give pupils time to reflect on what they have learned. In one class the teacher followed this process by leading a prayer which summarised the application of the learning to the children's lives, modelling what was needed for the learning to be reinforced in a spiritual way.

Assessment is based on the broad areas of attainment used nationally. Outcomes inform teachers' planning to ensure pupils' progress. Effective assessment procedures give the leaders of the school a clear picture of achievement in RE. Teachers use pupils' art work to assess their knowledge and understanding and pupils themselves are encouraged to reflect on their own learning through such strategies as mind-mapping and brainstorming.

**Grade 1**

## **Quality of the Curriculum**

The RE curriculum is based on the national programme "Here I am" (HIA) and meets the requirements of the Bishop's Conference. Teachers amend and expand the curriculum to better match the needs and interests of the pupils and to ensure that it is interesting and engaging. Acts of class and whole school worship are linked to HIA themes to extend and reinforce learning and displays and resources of high quality support an effective curriculum. The provision for Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) and Education for Personal Relationships

(EPR) accords with Diocesan and government guidelines and parents and Governors were consulted. No pupils are withdrawn.

Pupils engage with RE because they think it is enjoyable while being important and because it helps them, as they see it, to become better people. Parents comment on the way their children talk about what they have learned in RE. *"Children work brilliantly in RE. They have a good association of ideas and depth of understanding. They learn self-acceptance and how to improve. Most importantly they learn that God is a good friend and you can always talk to him."* RE is a way of life, informing all aspects of the school.

The curriculum for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is well-planned under its very effective leader and her supportive team of Teaching Assistants. The high quality of care informs the organisation and systems for induction, ensuring that children settle into school quickly and well and that parents are confident in the knowledge that they are secure and safe. Relationships with parents are excellent, as are links with the parish. The RE link governor involves parents and friends in a termly liturgy and pupils visit the parish church regularly, becoming familiar with the House of God and its significance.

Pupils with EAL are well-supported by a bilingual Teaching Assistant and those identified are assessed and helped by the highly skilled Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO).

The school supports the pupils and parents by providing a Breakfast Club and After School Club, greatly appreciated by working parents and confirming the school's care of its pupils. The good relationships with secondary schools result in additional opportunities for pupils to enjoy dance, drama and music as well as science, maths, ICT, PE in specialist colleges. The specialist teachers and sports coaches foster the acquisition of skills and develop team-building and co-operation. The excellent facilities of a modern gym and swimming pool bring another dimension for learning and enthusiasm, as well as promoting healthy lifestyles.

The enriching curriculum has been carefully planned to exemplify the beliefs, values and vision of the Catholic school; to reflect the cultural diversity of its community and to offer learning experiences that will contribute to pupils' development as good Christians.

**Grade 1**

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

The leaders and managers of RE are determined to keep the importance of RE as a high priority through very good systems which support school improvement. They are well-informed through the Learning Effectiveness Committee, of which the RE Link Governor and the RE Co-ordinator are members. The close links and excellent relationships between the parish priest (Link Governor) school and parents militate in favour of effective communication and focussed evaluation. Governors spend a morning in school annually when they do a "learning walk", involving lesson observations, talking to pupils about their work, looking at displays and having discussions with teachers. Any issues raised are then addressed and priorities are identified to be acted upon through the SDP. The established procedures for evaluation ensure the prominence of the subject.

The very positive relationships within the staff team support the drive for effective self-evaluation, led by the committed and enthusiastic RE Co-ordinator. Staff and leaders are

mutually supportive and characterised by a thorough determination to continually refine their practice for the benefit of pupils.

An open, honest enthusiasm which encourages dialogue and innovation is modelled by the Headteacher and permeates the life of the school including the approach to RE. The RE Co-ordinator shows what it is to be a disciple of Christ, putting the needs of other people before her own. She guides and supports, provides structures and systems, ensures clarity of vision and is unstinting in the time and effort she gives to doing the important work of bringing the members of the school community closer to God.

**Grade 1**