



INSPECTION REPORT

St Osmund's Catholic Primary School
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Headteacher: Mr M Fowler
Chair of Governors: Mrs S Thorpe

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: 26 – 27 March 2008
Date of previous inspection: 2 – 3 December 2003
Reporting Inspector: Mrs M Foster

Description of School

St Osmund's is a Catholic voluntary aided primary school serving the three parishes in Salisbury. It is a city school and has been established over a hundred and thirty years.

At the time of the inspection there were 207 pupils on roll. There are slightly more boys than girls. Sixty percent of pupils come from a Catholic background. The school draws pupils from a wide area and a diverse range of social backgrounds and culture. An increasing number of pupils is being admitted with English as an additional language, as families mainly from the Philippines and Poland join the community.

The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. There is, however, an above average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs. The number of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is well below the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

The school's clear Mission statement is implemented and evidenced in its every day life. Governors and the senior leadership team know the school's strengths and areas for development. They understand how to build on their successes and how to work effectively towards improvement. Teaching is generally good and as a result pupils make good progress. The curriculum is enriched by the significant contribution of the community.

The re-organisation of the board of governors and an increased commitment to self-improvement gives the school a good capacity for improvement.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

There were three issues identified in the last inspection. The time allocation for the teaching of Religious Education (RE) was judged to be too little in some classes. This has been addressed and all classes now ensure that RE teaching is allocated ten percent of curriculum time. The role of Co-ordinator and the need to establish systems for monitoring RE were also identified as areas for development. The role of the coordinator has been clearly defined for the new coordinator and systems have been agreed and are in place though not yet fully embedded. The previous inspection judged that pupils' high levels of knowledge in RE were insufficiently reflected in the quality of their written work. Standards of pupils' writing in RE have been raised and now match those in Literacy.

Grade 2

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The self-evaluation systems accurately identify the strengths and needs of the school. The senior leadership team share a clear sense of direction for the school's Catholic life and its further development. The re-organisation of both the governors and the senior leadership team is a positive initiative. The membership of the new coordinator for RE within the senior leadership team gives increased status to the subject, helping to support improvement. In addition, the planned collaboration of the RE co-ordinator and the KS1 co-ordinator is a promising development.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Fully embed the monitoring of teaching and learning so that practice is consistent throughout the school
- Ensure that the marking policy is adhered to in all classes
- Continue to develop the role of the new RE coordinator
- Develop fully the role of the RE link governor.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The governors work with a serious commitment to ensure the school achieves the spirit of its mission statement as a Catholic school. They have established and continue to foster a Catholic environment in which each child is supported towards an understanding of what it is to follow Christ and to grow in His love. Their ambitious plans for the future include breakfast and after-school provision as well as pre-school provision.

Governors are closely involved in the life of the school, particularly the RE link governor who is the parish priest. He frequently visits classrooms and listens and talks to children bringing a personal dimension to that relationship and greater understanding of their faith. His presence in school contributes to the quality of relationships with staff and with parents.

The governors have worked hard both before and since the Ofsted inspection in January 2008 to put in place a new structure which has rigorous systems to monitor and evaluate the development of the whole school. Governors have clearly identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school in their strategic plan. This plan is in the early stages of implementation but it is impressive in its breadth of vision and accuracy of analysis. It details rigorous, practical steps which focus on raising standards, addressing weaknesses and supporting self improvement. There is a strong nucleus of governors working with the school community, including the senior leadership team, staff, parents and children to support this process.

The Headteacher leads strongly by example, with qualities of gentleness and fairness stemming from a belief in the presence of Christ at the centre of the school. He has a clear understanding of the importance of capitalising on the daily opportunities and observances which contribute increasingly to the development of the pupils' spiritual and moral life.

Staff acknowledge their shared responsibility to support and understand the vision of a faith school and their obligation to contribute to it using their individual talents and capabilities. Under the secure and sensitive leadership of the Headteacher they are positive examples of what it is to be followers of Christ in their relationships with each other, the children and the wider community. A retreat for staff is being planned for next year so that there is opportunity for shared liturgy and spiritual growth.

Pupils grow in responsibility from the Early Years. Each class draws up its own class rules so that pupils understand that their behaviour affects others and that they have a responsibility to contribute to the well being of others. They learn to practice what it means to live the Christian commandment of caring for each other. Foundation Stage children take turns to carry out small tasks for each other and older children help younger ones as play leaders at break and lunchtimes. The School Council gives children direct experience of seeking the views of others and making decisions on their behalf.

The inclusion of all learners is a central tenet of the school's ethos and most learners achieve well. Pupils with specific medical needs are well cared for, with staff trained annually on how best to continue to meet those needs.

Very good links with parents and the wider parish communities are testimony to the excellent quality of relationships within the school.

Grade 2

Collective Worship

Prayer is central to the life of the school. Each morning the Headteacher and some staff meet to pray together before the start of school.

There are opportunities for pupils to pray throughout the day, ensuring that it is a familiar and valued element of school life. Pupils and staff pray together in and out of class. The traditional activities of the liturgical year are taught: in May a Rosary group, led by the RE co-ordinator, meet to pray at lunchtimes in an attractive quiet area. The recent improvements to the school environment facilitate pupils experiencing the power of reflection: the new garden and the gazebo offer places to pray or meditate, with or without adult support.

The spiritual development of pupils is evidenced in the reverence they show in prayer and the respect with which they treat other people.

The celebration of Mass is given its proper status in the time spent preparing the pupils to participate. Masses are planned for the year to ensure that as many opportunities as possible are available for the school and parish to worship together. A catechist from the parish comes weekly to the school, with the Church organist, to practice hymns and the sung responses to the Proper of the Mass. Younger children, with limited reading ability, have additional time with the same volunteer, being taught the hymn choruses and sung responses. This expands all pupils'

liturgical knowledge and enables them to participate in the worship of God, not only at school Masses but also in the parish Churches, where the children are again involved.

The wider church community provides further models to the children of generous adult self-giving. A former teacher of Speech and Drama voluntarily teaches the children the skills necessary to read at Mass, so that they will be heard clearly by the congregation. From the earliest stages, children are thus provided with role models of engagement and commitment to the practice of their faith.

Pupils learn to take responsibility by organising class and Key Stage acts of collective worship, for example, two Year 5 boys researched information on the Passover using the Bible and the internet and presented their findings to their own class and then to Key Stage 2. The presentation was enriched by their choice of appropriate artefacts and visual cues to facilitate the learning of their peers.

Children, when questioned, know that Religious Education is not simply a body of knowledge but a way of learning how to live their lives. One girl expressed what RE is about to her "It makes us think about other people and how we should care about them."

They are interested in how other people celebrate festivals and have the same feast days yet diverse customs to celebrate them.

Teachers provide regular and imaginative opportunities for role play reinforcing learning and reflective prayer. Visualisations engage pupils' interest and deepen their appreciation of the mysteries of faith. A retreat for Year 5 pupils will take place later this year to develop further the pupils' understanding of liturgical formation.

The prayer life of the school contributes strongly and consistently to the spiritual and moral development of pupils.

Grade 1

Community Cohesion

The school has a clear and obvious Christian ethos based on the values of the Gospel and exemplified in a document "Our Values" which is available to all.

The principles it encapsulates are shared and evident in the relationships between the members of the school community. Parents are unanimous in their acknowledgement of the school as a welcoming and caring community, where their children flourish in a well-ordered and happy environment.

Pupils understand the need to respect and care for each other. They are very well-behaved, courteous to adults and each other, helpful and positive in their attitudes. They support each other in their learning and pray for one another as well as for the wider world. Children are able to articulate their own beliefs, know and respect those of others and celebrate the diversity of cultures in their school community. This includes the publishing of articles written by pupils in the *Catholics in Salisbury* magazine. They are aware of the time and support the adults in and out of school give to them. For example, they are grateful that the improvement to the school

environment came about because their parents and staff and Friends of the School worked with them after school and at weekends to build the maze, plant beds and the enchanted forest. They are really proud of their achievement and their permanent record – handprints in wet concrete! These children know first-hand what groups of people can achieve, with a common aim and the willingness to give generously their time and hard work for the benefit of others.

The school seeks to include all pupils and their families in its corporate life and worship. Governors, parents and parishioners are regularly invited into school for celebration assemblies and Masses. The close links between school and parish mean that the pupils meet the same people in shared liturgies in both places, emphasising the common bond of faith that holds the two communities together.

Pupils from other cultures see themselves acknowledged in the displays of photographs, the class books and in the opportunities for publishing their accounts of national customs and celebrations. Pupils appreciate that their identity and cultures are valued and celebrated, as when one of the school Masses invited children to attend in national dress. In these and other opportunities, all pupils gain insight into the traditions of others in ways likely to develop understanding and respect. For example, an assembly focussed on international New Year customs where children interviewed their peers from overseas and presented the information gathered in a Powerpoint presentation.

The celebration of the liturgy for Good Friday provided a significant opportunity for families to pray the way of the Cross together. Parishioners who also were families from the school took the lead in presenting each Station, some using their mother tongue, thus giving public witness to faith practiced in life and shared together.

Pupils raise money for a wide variety of charities, including CAFOD and Edukaid, not simply because this is a social good. Their understanding of charity is mature enough for them to have made links from a Victorian topic which included homelessness to the current issue of the needs of the homeless within their own city.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

For most learners standards are good. Pupils are articulate and have good knowledge and understanding of their faith, evidenced in their oral responses and written work. Most are able to talk confidently about their learning. Some make very good progress, and where this is matched by good marking systems, they know how to improve their work.

Most pupils make good progress and some make very good progress. Those pupils with Special Educational Needs and those with English as an additional language also make good progress.

The exceptionally good behaviour contributes strongly to their learning and to the good use of time in lessons.

The senior leadership team has focussed on raising standards in RE through monitoring and evaluating pupils' work, formally and informally. Issues from this process together with feedback from lesson observations are discussed in staff meetings and in individual teacher

interviews. The systems have still to be fully embedded but in most year groups there is an expectation of high standards of work. Pupils' standards match those achieved in Literacy, which are above the national average.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. In the best lessons observed, pupils were engaged and challenged to think beyond the superficial so as to give a more considered response. A variety of teaching styles, together with an acknowledgement that individual pupils learn in different ways and need different approaches, help all pupils to learn more effectively. In upper KS2 pupils are given a choice whether to draft their work or not. This gives them an opportunity to evaluate themselves as learners and to try out methods of working that suit them best. They also take some responsibility for organising their own time to re-draft their work, acquiring the skills of independent learning. Pupils were swift to explain that they enjoyed their learning and believed that teachers helped them to make good progress. The use of information and communication technology enhanced and extended pupils' learning and gave them alternative ways of recording and displaying their work. Role play, from the Early Years, is frequently used to engage children's interest and enjoyment and to enable them to consider the moral aspects of how their behaviour affects other people. In the best practice, the careful preparation and dignity of both the actors and audience enhances the quality of learning opportunities.

In the best lessons, teachers built effectively on pupils' previous learning. Questions of a demanding kind helped to clarify pupils' understanding and teachers modelled answers to show pupils more challenging ways of thinking. The very good behaviour, resulting from good behaviour management seen in most classrooms, contributes to the effective learning. It allows the teachers to focus on furthering pupils' learning rather than managing behaviour.

Effective use of teaching assistants supports a range of pupils, from the less able to those who are gifted and talented. Pupils with English as an additional language are also well-supported by the school and external agencies. Pupils for whom the physical act of writing is too challenging use the computer where appropriate.

The school uses the Diocesan model of assessment from the national programme *Here I Am*. Records of achievement are kept and passed on to the next class teacher to help ensure continuity. Younger children are usefully assessed orally.

Marking is positive and where practice is best, teachers ask pupils questions to challenge their thinking and deepen their understanding. Misconceptions are addressed as whole class issues or on an individual basis as appropriate. This good practice is not yet consistently applied across the school. The senior leadership team is aware of this and it is working towards improvement. Targets are set for pupils and a form of assessment using "I can..." statements is being trialled and will be reviewed next term.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in relation to its content and the allocation of time. The school follows the national programme of *Here I Am*. Its curriculum is firmly rooted in the life and teaching of Christ and the Church. This is reflected in the school's way of life, its beliefs and values and its liturgical and community celebrations.

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is appropriate for young children and provides a secure basis for future learning. Good use is made of art as a creative vehicle for the teaching of RE, contributing to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Good procedures for the induction of new pupils have been established and these include close attention to the needs of parents.

The school has developed an appropriate policy for *Education for Personal Relationships* which includes *Sex Relationship Education*. This fulfils the legal requirements and is set within a moral context. Parents were involved in the evaluation of the projected programme *In the Beginning*. Those parents unable to attend the meeting led by the Diocesan Advisor, were invited into school to familiarise themselves with the programme.

The school is characterised by the care it takes of all its pupils. Staff know the pupils well and children have every confidence in them to sort out problems or difficulties. This fosters positive relationships which contribute to a strong sense of belonging. Pupils learn to value reflection and the opportunity to think about their actions and feelings in relation to others. Photographic evidence captures the enthusiasm and imagination the children feel for their learning and liturgical involvement and the use of information technology gives them different ways of presenting their work.

The high expectations and creative approaches in the best teaching results in exceptional progress and a depth of spirituality which is a wonderful example of faith in action. The exceptional additional activities provided through lunchtime and after school clubs gives significant enrichment and extension to the RE and wider curriculum. Volunteers from the community lead two school choirs, one liturgical and one secular, providing high quality musical learning and opening up for pupils the possibility of life-long opportunities to use their talents and capabilities.

The imaginative use of space outside the classrooms, the high quality of displays and creative use of resources support the different ways in which the needs and interests of learners are met.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The senior leadership team and governors are clear about the purpose of teaching RE and are committed to raising standards and achievement. The strategic plan should provide the rigour to translate plans into action.

The new governors have completed the induction training provided by the local authority. The governors have appropriate procedures for the selection of staff and statutory procedures for Child Protection are in place. The link governor for RE is relatively new to the post and is aware of his specific responsibilities though these have yet to be fully implemented.

The subject leader for RE is retiring but leaves effective structures in place which will need to be embedded across the whole school to achieve the desired consistency of practice. She is working collaboratively with her replacement to ensure continuity and further improvement, fully supported by the senior leadership team.

The policy for monitoring the teaching of RE has recently been reviewed and gives clear indicators for future action.

There is a strong commitment and capability on the part of all the leaders of the school to work towards continuous improvement.

Grade 2