



INSPECTION REPORT

St. John's Catholic Primary School
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DfE Number: 800/3424

Headteacher: Mr. R Coleman
Chair of Governors: Mr. L Swan

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: 9-10th July 2014
Date of previous inspection: 17-18 March 2009

Reporting Inspector: Mrs M Barnard

Description of School

St. John's Catholic Primary School serves the parishes of St. John the Evangelist, Ss Peter and Paul, Our Lady & St. Alphege and St Dunstan's. The parish church of St. Alphege is adjacent to the school. There are close links with three parishes and the parish priests visit the school often. Due to illness, the Parish Priest of St. Alphege has been unable to continue with his very valuable support to the school in recent months. The school is larger than average and has 318 pupils on roll of whom 65% are baptised Catholic. The school moved to a new site approximately four years ago and the new facilities provide an excellent environment for the pupils. The percentage of free school meals is well below the national average at 7.2% (national 26.7%) and the percentage of minority ethnic groups is also below the national average at 20.7% (national 28.7%) but very high for the area. The school supports a number of pupils at school action which is slightly above the national average. The school has significantly higher statemented pupils than the national average. The school deprivation indicator is less than the national average. The number of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium is much lower than average. The majority of pupils are White British and this is higher than average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Requires improvement in order to be good; Grade 4: Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 2

St John's is a good catholic School because of the following:

- The strong vision for Catholic education by all stakeholders
- Parish school links are well established and supportive
- Governor commitment and involvement in the school is an outstanding feature
- The warm and welcoming environment and the excellent facilities offered by the school
- The leadership of RE across the school
- The strong commitment to the school by the headteacher
- The care guidance and support for pupils

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

- The headteacher and RE subject leaders have the capacity to drive improvement with Religious Education
- Pupils have the ability to improve and be challenged
- All stakeholders are committed to continual improvement
- The school self-evaluation identifies key areas for improvement

What the school should do to improve further

In order to become an outstanding the school needs to:

- Improve teaching and learning to ensure:
 - That there are extended opportunities for more able pupils to be challenged to achieve the higher levels more consistently

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- A majority of teaching is consistently judged to be outstanding
 - Levels of progress in each year group and each key stage improve further, particularly for more able pupils, so that attainment over time at least matches or exceeds that of English
 - Best practice in Assessment for Learning (AfL) is shared so that pupils better understand the level they are working at and what they need to do to move to the next level
- Improve further the involvement of pupils in the Prayer Life of the school so that:
 - Almost all pupils are given opportunities to regularly plan, lead and take responsibility for collective worship across the school
 - Opportunities are provided for pupils to engage fully in evaluating the Prayer Life and the Catholic Life of the school
 - Other faiths are systematically provided for across the school
 - Action planning for RE is consolidated and sharpened with clearly measurable outcomes and timescales to give more focus to school improvement priorities

How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?

Most pupils take on some responsibilities, participate constructively in the Catholic Life of the school and are reflective and inquiring. They understand that religious belief and spiritual values are important for many people however their understanding of other faiths needs further development. Most pupils demonstrate a culture of respect through their behaviour and attitudes although during the Inspection a small minority of pupils were distracted in lessons and during collective worship. Generally pupils are proud of their background and beliefs and they understand the importance of key celebrations in the liturgical year and participate in the parish communities for which the school serves. They express their own views and beliefs with confidence and understand the idea of service to others through charitable giving. This is demonstrated through the support shown for organisations such as Cafod and the Cancer appeals. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and the need to forgive. They are alert to the needs of others and the school works hard to enable pupils to understand social justice and the needs of those beyond their own community through the school's Chaplaincy programme.

Rates of progress are at least good for the majority of pupils in each key stage. Most are motivated and enthusiastic and are keen to do well, generally being diligently in their work and producing good outcomes. Pupils enjoy their work in RE and can articulate why they think learning about their faith is important to them. Marking of work is strong in the school and generally of a high standard. In marking, pupils have opportunities to respond to challenge questions set by teachers for them in order to extend their thinking skills. More able pupils would benefit from being given activities in lessons clearly linked to the higher level descriptors, to further stretch their capabilities. Those pupils with additional needs are well supported by staff. One child with little English was given an activity in her own language and this was a model of good practice in supporting the pupil to make progress in her learning. Most pupils can use religious language and can make links between faith and life.

Pupils participate in prayer and worship such as; in the whole school and class masses, assemblies, the sacrament of Reconciliation and an annual Benediction service with the help of adults to support them. Some pupils have opportunities to contribute through their own prayers and role play. This is still a developing area in the school and the aim is to ensure that almost all pupils will have regular opportunities to plan and lead prayer and take responsibility for worship with confidence from their earliest years. The Chaplaincy group has begun 'The Leaders in Faith'

programme with a small group of Year 6 pupils and there are plans to extend this to include all pupils. This will support pupils to take more of a leadership role in prayer and collective worship. Most pupils act with reverence and are keen to participate in the prayer life of the school such as the Taizé reflection that Y5/6 pupils were involved in with one of the local Parish Priests. Pupils sing well and reflect in silent prayer, joining in community prayers appropriately and with confidence and show respect for one another. Class prayers are a regular part of each school day. Pupils have a good understanding of the meaning of religious seasons and feasts. Pupils are becoming skilled in developing prayer with the help of adults, such as the dedicated and enthusiastic Rosary group that meets regularly to discuss and pray together in their free time under the leadership of the Chaplain. The work last year on pilgrimage, the Mission week and the Retreat weekend for Y5/6 pupils have all contributed to the spiritual and moral development of pupils.

Grade 2

In order to become outstanding the school needs to:

- Increase the proportion of pupils making and exceeding expected progress
- Offer opportunities to all pupils to regularly plan, lead and take responsibility for prayer and worship from their earliest years in a variety of gatherings
- Provide opportunities to pupils to evaluate the Catholic life of the school and the Prayer life of the school.
- Ensure all pupils demonstrate through their behaviour and attitudes respect during prayer and collective worship

How effective are leaders and governors in developing the Catholic Life of the school?

Leaders and governors are deeply committed to promoting, monitoring and evaluating the Catholic Life of the school. They are motivated and inspired by the task and are role models for the whole community. The Mission Statement is regularly reviewed and shared with all stakeholders. They understand the Diocesan guidelines and seek to put these into practice as evidenced by the use of the Curriculum Directory and the People of Hope documents as well as the document on Values, Virtues and Behaviours in a Catholic school. Leaders and governors regularly attend training opportunities. There is unequivocal evidence that the Catholic Mission of the school is a priority as well as the spiritual and moral development of pupils. The school's self-evaluation reflects the commitment of the leadership to continuous improvement. The views of others are sought to inform self-evaluation. Self-evaluation at all levels is a reflection on the monitoring and self-challenge that the school sets itself. This leads to suitable actions with key partners to promote the Catholic life of the school. Action planning is in place and regularly reviewed and developed including the Chaplaincy plan. Action plans however need to be consolidated and sharpened with clearly measurable outcomes to sharpen focus on school improvement priorities. Each of the parish priests gives an excellent level of support to the school.

Leaders and governors maintain an oversight of Religious Education and fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities. Governors challenge and support the school in the monitoring and evaluation process to ensure that improvements to outcomes for pupils are put in place. Self-evaluation demonstrates that leaders understand many aspects of the school well but it is not yet evident that leadership is fully focused on the key issue of pupil progress and an accurate assessment of teaching and learning. Self-evaluation reflects the monitoring that occurs at all levels. Teaching and learning is regularly monitored, pupils work is scrutinised and levelling is moderated internally. Pupils have an opportunity to express their views through pupil conferencing. Teachers feel well supported by the school leadership. Teaching overall was found to be good with some outstanding features and as a result outcomes are generally good, although

for the more able pupils, outcomes could be even better if they were provided with a greater level of challenge in lessons.

Grade 1

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Most of the teaching is good and is effective in ensuring that most pupils are consistently interested in their learning and making good progress. Assessment procedures ensure that teachers and other adults plan to meet the needs of most pupils including those with additional needs. However, adults need to raise further their expectations about what pupils can achieve and teaching needs to be more focused on challenging more able pupils to reach the higher levels. Teachers generally have sound subject knowledge and this contributes to the good progress of pupils. Pupils are keen to learn, concentrate well and enjoy their work in RE. The school is well resourced including provision for technology which pupils use confidently. Other adults support teaching and learning well. Marking is of a high quality and invites responses from pupils to challenge their thinking. Pupils still need to understand what level they are working at and what they need to do to move to the next level in order to improve further their level of progress. .

All Bishops Conference requirements and local diocesan requirements are fully met. The programme for Relationship and Sex Education has been agreed by governors and is in place. The school introduced the God Matters scheme of work to the school in December 2012 and has worked hard to ensure that this covers all aspects in the Curriculum Directory. The new scheme has enabled the school to plan more effectively and has had a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress. Recent support from the diocese has enabled the school to assess levels more accurately and levelling is discussed and moderated at staff meetings to enable staff to consolidate the process. The curriculum enables pupils to reflect on their Catholic faith and the responses it gives to questions of meaning and purpose. The school is developing links with other subject areas and themes, for example the focus on justice and peace within the Chaplaincy programme which supports the development of pupils' spiritual and moral development. The school curriculum is differentiated to enable groups of pupils and individuals to access the curriculum at their level and this was particularly evident for less able pupils and those with English as an additional language where support was well focused. The school should ensure that the curriculum provides for Other Faiths teaching and that this is systematically planned for across the school.

Prayer is central to the life of the school and a key part of every celebration. The Leadership of the school is very committed to both strengthening and modelling prayer. Spiritual development is seen as a key aspect of school life and staff encouraged to reflect on how they can facilitate this. Staff and pupils pray together and there are a range of formal and informal opportunities for daily prayer. In a recent assembly for example pupils were introduced to Taize prayer around the cross. Prayer for staff and pupils is planned to facilitate the attendance of parents and parishioners through regular Masses in the parish churches. This could be developed further to support the local Catholic communities of parents and parishioners and to promote the Mission of the school. Pupils' liturgical formation is well planned and facilitated by the parish priests who visit the school frequently. The recently introduced Chaplaincy programme is already providing valuable opportunities for developing the prayer life of the school, such as the Rosary group, but it is too early to judge the impact of this across the school. The Church seasons are focal points in the life of the school and the themes are consistent with the Catholic character of the school. Opportunities for receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation are planned for in Advent and Lent. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to participate in prayer and worship through assemblies, class and whole school Masses and reflections. The school is committed to trying to ensure that prayer is at the heart of what the school does and through the work of the chaplaincy team they hope to make it even more directed at pupils needs. Opportunities for pupils to lead and organise prayer and worship are limited at present but the school has plans for this to be further developed through the Chaplaincy programme.

What the School needs to do in order to become outstanding:

- *Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that teachers are acutely aware of their pupils' capabilities at the higher levels and plan very effectively to build on these*
- *Develop pupils understanding of the level they are working at and ensure pupils know how to improve their work*
- *Plan opportunities for all pupils to lead and organise acts of worship*
- *Consistently and regularly monitor and evaluate the prayer life of the school leading to effective planning for improvements*
- *Develop a systematic system for the inclusion of Other Faiths in the RE curriculum*

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 85 parental questionnaires returned. The overwhelming majority of responses agreed with the statements in the questionnaire and were complimentary about the school, the staff, and the headteacher. In particular, parents were very complimentary about the Catholic ethos and the very positive feeling of community. Some responses to the question 'what is distinctive about this Catholic school' were:

'The sense of community, its ethos and the attitude of the Head and staff'

'A warm and caring environment'

'The way pupils are taught to care for others and treat everyone as equal – the school has far exceeded our expectations'

'The strong Catholic ethos'

'Faith formation and moral character building'

'It is a caring and wholly inclusive environment where children are cherished and valued'