



INSPECTION REPORT

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Webbs Wood Rd, Bradley Stoke BS328EJ

Telephone: 01454 866390

e-mail address: admin@stmarysbs.org.uk

URN Number: 131410

Headteacher: Mrs Paula Marsh

Chair of Governors: Mr Ian Greenway

**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: 26th&27th March
Date of previous inspection: 8th &9th May 2007
Reporting Inspector: Mrs A Fowler
Additional Inspector: Mrs Celia Dolan

Description of School

- St Mary's is a smaller than average-sized primary school which is one of two primary schools serving the parish of Holy Family. The main parish church is some distance from the school but a parish mass centre is attached to the school building.
- The school operates the RE syllabus 'God Matters'
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher is at the school and a new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below average.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has received many awards including an International School Award, the Eco School's silver award and the Royal Horticultural Society's bronze award. There is also a chaplaincy team
- The school has a breakfast club

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

Grade 2

This is a good Catholic school with some outstanding elements because:

- All Pupils have opportunities to take on responsibilities and participate in the Catholic life of the school. Some pupils are beginning to help in the process of evaluating the distinctive nature of the school. The work of the Chaplaincy group is a strength of the school
- Pupils spiritual and moral development is outstanding
- Pupils are motivated to do well and nearly all pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons
- Opportunities are provided for pupils to participate in the prayer life of the school. Most pupils are offered opportunities to lead prayer and worship.
- Leaders and Governors are committed to the Catholic life of the school and carry out monitoring activities. The close connection between the school and the parish priest (who is the link governor for RE) is a strength of the school
- Staff are enthusiastic and skilled, with the majority of teaching seen being at least good.

The school is not yet outstanding overall because:

- In some cases the expectations of what pupils can achieve in RE is not sufficiently challenging and therefore standards are not high enough
- Monitoring and Evaluation are not sufficiently rigorous and do not yet fully contribute to the overall strategic planning of RE and the distinctive life of the school.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

- The school has identified their own priorities for development
- Parents, Pupils and staff are extremely supportive of the school
- Leaders and Governors are determined to ensure the highest standards and to continue to develop the distinctiveness of the school
- Teachers want to ensure the best results for their pupils

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that in RE tasks are well developed and sufficiently challenging
 - Ensure a balance between Attainment target one (learning about RE) and Attainment target two (learning from RE)
 - Ensure that the assessment tasks more clearly reflect the level descriptors
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How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?

Grade 2

Pupils are proud of their school and feel safe and happy. They benefit substantially from the Catholic life of the school. They do understand that the distinctive nature of the school is more than just the outward signs. Most pupils are able to make connections between faith and life. A year six pupil for example when talking about the need to support the work of Cafod was able to connect this clearly to aspects of Jesus' teaching. Pupils are given opportunities to take responsibility through for example, the school council, the eco club, the chaplaincy group. Because of the opportunities offered to them to take responsibility for aspects of school life and each other they are becoming confident articulate young people who have a clear sense of right and wrong. They clearly understand the need to help others less fortunate than themselves and a real strength of the school is the pupils respect for other cultures. Those pupils working within the chaplaincy team contribute to the evaluation of the distinctive nature of the school. They benefit from having a mass centre on site and regular visits from the parish priest which strengthens their connection with the wider life of the church.

In the RE lessons observed pupils were well motivated and enthusiastic about their work. Behaviour both within RE lessons and throughout the school was outstanding and their relationship with staff excellent. Pupils are keen to succeed and welcome being challenged. Pupils are beginning to use religious language though this is not consistent through all groups. Although standards are good overall standards and progress within RE could be further improved by focusing more clearly on the level descriptors, especially within AT1. At times tasks need to be structured more carefully to match the learning objectives.

All pupils show respect for each other and are at ease when praying together. Year two pupils for example showed exemplary behaviour and acted with reverence when in the parish mass. This respect and reverence is clearly modelled by staff. Pupils lead prayer and worship within their form groups and participate in whole school assemblies. During the inspection a whole school assembly was observed and all pupils were given opportunities to participate through answering questions, through singing and through reflection. Throughout all worship observed

pupils sang with enthusiasm and joined in prayers with confidence. Through the RE programme and the life of the school as a whole they are developing their understanding of the Church's Year able to explain the meaning of the seasons. Those pupils who are chaplaincy group members are able to take the lead in planning specific events with a religious character and this work needs to be both continued and extended.

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

Grade2

Leaders and governors are committed to developing the Catholic Life of the school, which is seen as a priority, and act as role models for others. Bishops Conference requirements are fulfilled. Leaders and Governors have recently reflected on the diocesan Guidelines, 'People of Hope' and reviewed aspects of school life in the light of this document. This is to be commended as good practice. All Bishops' Conference requirements are met. The parish priest, who is also the link governor for RE, is a frequent visitor to the school. He offers support to the school in a variety of ways, liturgical and pastoral and in his role as governor has taken part in some monitoring activities including observing RE lessons. The close cooperation enhances the connection between school and parish and helps pupils develop their understanding of the wider church. The care and welfare of all pupils is seen as a priority and this enhances the positive way pupils view the school. Links with other catholic school are in place and there are clear plans to enhance partnership working. Staff and parents have a good understanding of the Catholic life of the school and this is enhanced through the general newsletter and the RE newsletter which clearly identify activities relating both to RE and the prayer life of the school. The website also highlights the distinctive nature of the school.

The RE coordinator has conducted monitoring activities by observing lessons and conducting book trawls. Informal monitoring does take place but more rigorous monitoring and systematic evaluation relating to provision and outcomes which can provide a firm base for analysis and future improvements is not yet fully in place. Although Leaders and Governors do have a picture of progress in RE it is not sufficiently accurate enough nor can it easily identify differences between groups, or the impact of specific events or strategies. Teachers feel supported by leadership and able to ask questions about developing their own practice. Although parents are almost entirely supportive of the school and value the leadership there is a perception that they are not fully informed about relationships and sex education. The school has in fact provided opportunities for parents to learn about the new syllabus but parents did not respond to the invitation so leaders and governors need to revisit this area and explore ways of communicating to parents the varied ways the school does offer to find out more about this area of school life.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 2

Pupils are motivated to succeed and perceive RE as an important subject helping develop their understanding of important issues. Achievement is clearly celebrated and because pupils are offered the opportunities to respond to questions and take part in group or paired work they are confident and articulate. Pupils' attainment is regularly assessed and the school has begun using App sheets to help pupils clarify their own understanding of the level they are working at. Where marking is clear and consistent pupils benefit from feedback however marking is not

consistent across the school with some marking placing the emphasis on literacy work or simply not diagnostic enough. The majority of teaching was good, (one lesson was outstanding) with teachers demonstrating clear organisational skills, good use of ICT and differentiated activities. Support by other adults in class was used effectively to support learning. All teachers had a clear focus for the lesson though on occasions the task set did not enable the learning objective to be met. The syllabus needs to be strengthened to fully match the aims of the Curriculum Directory and in particular staff need to be clearer and more accurate when assessing work aimed at the higher attainment levels. There are areas of learning which would benefit from more explicit attention, for example although pupils were able to recall with great confidence stories from the Bible they were not always clear about what the Bible is or how we approach it.

On occasions tasks set in KS2 groups do not enhance pupil learning or reflect the more evaluative approach needed to achieve the higher grades. The curriculum covers a range of other faiths and in this area work not only increases pupils' knowledge but encourages pupils to think about the need to respect people from other faiths and cultures.

A variety of opportunities both formal and informal are offered to pupils to help develop their own spirituality. Classes all contain focal areas that reflect the seasons of the Church's Year, and offer opportunities to participate, for example by writing their own prayers, placing a bead in a container when they wish to pray and making Lenten promises. Displays around the school also reflected the liturgical year and were used to enhance pupils' understanding. Pupils within their forms are encouraged not only to participate but to help lead and plan assemblies. On a rota basis forms attend the parish mass which takes place once a week in the mass centre attached to the school, whole school masses are celebrated and pupils also visit the parish church which is some distance away from the school. These activities all contribute to pupils' awareness that they are part of a larger diocesan community. Respect and reverence in prayer is modelled by all adults within the school community which in turn helps support the development of this behaviour in children. The chaplaincy group within the school is also taking part in the diocesan programme Leaders in Faith. Those pupils who were members of the chaplaincy group demonstrated a developing confidence in both leading and planning prayer and events supporting catholic life

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 51 parental questionnaires received. The vast majority (over 98%) were extremely positive about the school as a whole. Many parents highlighted that they chose the school specifically for its Catholic ethos. Some typical quotes from the questionnaires when asked 'why did you choose this school' are as follows:

"Excellent track record in strong Catholic values, reflective and spiritual worship"

"Their vision and the way they make children feel valued and individual"

"The school is like one family"

The only area highlighted was a perceived lack of information about relationship and sex education. The school has in fact provided opportunities for parents to find out more about this.