



INSPECTION REPORT

St Louis Catholic Primary School

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Head Teacher: Richard Triggs

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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**

Date of inspection: 9-10th March 2017

Date of previous inspection: July 2013

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington

Additional Inspector: Mrs Sarah Wembridge

Description of the school

St. Louis is a slightly smaller than average size Catholic primary school, with 215 pupils on roll, 72% of whom are Catholic. The school serves the parish of St. Catharine of Alexandria. Children come from mixed socio economic backgrounds in Frome and the outlying villages. 35.2% of the children come from ethnic minority backgrounds, which is above the national average. Around 30% of pupils have English as an Additional Language (EAL) mainly from Polish families. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs support is 11% of the pupils on roll. The role of chair of governors is at present shared between two recent appointees.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 3

This is a school which requires improvement.

- The school is a fully inclusive school where all pupils are made welcome.
- The pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They demonstrate care and respect for each other, and have a positive attitude to learning.
- Leaders have not managed satisfactorily to fulfil all the requirements since the last inspection.
- The governing body and school leaders are committed to the promotion and nurturing of the school's Catholic life and mission but have not yet secured effective and robust processes to monitor provision and outcomes.
- Rigorous and formal processes for promoting and monitoring Catholic life are not yet embedded, with little documentary evidence of any impact.
- The development of assessment for learning, and marking which challenges and shows pupils how to improve, has some impact on learning over time, but it is inconsistent across the year groups. Inset has been provided over the last three years to deepen teachers' subject knowledge in order to challenge the more able. However, the expectations and the confidence of some teachers are not strong.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement so that pupils' progress and achievement become good.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop requires improvement

- The issues and areas for development which the school was asked to address at the last inspection in 2013 have only recently been tackled with some measure of success since the appointment of an RE coordinator in September 2016. She is making a significant difference to provision and outcomes, supported by the co-chairs of the governing body and the very proactive and experienced link governor for RE.
- The school's self-evaluation document identifies a large number of key areas to be tackled, and lists many priorities for action. The governing body is now more aware of the Catholic life of the school, through the first evaluative reports from the inspirational RE coordinator and RE link governor, who have made remarkably good progress in a very short time in raising the quality of teaching and learning.
- The school has asked parents and pupils, through a questionnaire, their views and suggestions for improvement, but it remains unclear what use was made of this feedback. There is now,

however, growing evidence that the school is beginning to demonstrate the capacity to follow through its objectives, and the first shoots of improvement are becoming evident.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils more opportunities to take ownership of their own learning by encouraging independent learning, through challenging questioning and marking, which requires real intellectual effort and results in more extended, reflective pieces of writing.
- Develop all pupils' contribution to the Catholic life of the school through detailed and measurable objectives.
- Encourage and support teachers more systematically to further deepen their RE subject knowledge in order to be able to challenge their more able pupils confidently.
- The governing body to embed rigorous monitoring processes in order to measure improvement in provision and outcomes, and to establish a culture of accountability of school leaders and teachers.

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

Grade 3

a) The extent to which pupils understand, contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school

- The chaplaincy team is beginning to take the lead in assembly, the Rosary Club, and checking RE prayer tables in the classroom, and moving on to checking displays around the school. The group is at a very early stage in developing the confidence and skills to take full ownership of their liturgies and assemblies. Much depends on teachers themselves having the confidence to let the children take some initiative.
- Pupils' lives are touched by the Catholic ethos of the school, which they accept, and flourish in an atmosphere of faith and spirituality. In conversation however, they find it more difficult to articulate what it means to be in a Catholic school and what how it differs from other schools. Nevertheless, they have internalised the values promoted by the school and live out the link between faith and action.
- Although pupils have not been involved in a formal reviewing of the school's Mission Statement, it is very much part of their lives and often brought to the fore in assemblies and lessons. They increasingly take on a range of responsibilities, which show they are alert to the needs of others. For instance, the Red Hats older pupils help and watch out for the younger children. All pupils play an important role in raising money for charities both locally and globally.
- Pupils' good behaviour contributes much to the warm and calm atmosphere of the school. They have a genuine respect for those from different backgrounds due to a growing understanding of different faiths that they have studied and reflected on in RE. There is a real sense of belonging here which is shared by all regardless of faith or none.

b) How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Evaluation of pupils' achievement and progress is hindered by the absence of any evidence of assessment and levels of progress over the last three years. The school has only adopted a baseline assessment since the start of this academic year. From the scrutiny of pupils' current work and teachers' assessments, most pupils enter the school with prior religious knowledge, which is in line or above expectation.
- Pupils make good progress in the early years. They are clearly well grounded in the concept of prayer, progressing to a sound grasp of parable, symbolism and basic religious literacy. In a Year 1 lesson on the Temptations of Jesus, pupils were able not only to empathise with Jesus, but also understood that they can imitate Him as well.
- By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are making good progress in relation to their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs, disadvantaged students, and those with English as an additional language, make similarly good progress because of effective planned interventions and the pro-active support of learning assistants.
- At Key Stage 2, both progress and attainment are slower with outcomes not always matching pupils' abilities. Progress is often blocked because learning objectives and tasks do not match, or are set at a level lower than the pupils' prior knowledge and ability. This, in effect is curtailing any progress upwards. Pupils lack the encouragement and challenge to take ownership of their own learning. Where there is good learning pupils can be insightful and questioning, and able to express themselves at length both verbally and in writing.
- Discussions with pupils and responses in their written work show that, as they move up the school, they become more confident in using religious language in a meaningful way. However, their ability to learn independently, and through group and class discussions, is dependent in large measure on the quality of teachers' knowledge, skills, challenge and confidence.
- Pupils nevertheless want to learn and demonstrate a positive interest in learning new facts and ideas; willing to strike out on their own when provided with opportunities such as research tasks. When asked, pupils were positive about RE lessons, and are ready to be involved and challenged more especially through art, drama, and more imaginative challenges. They are able to think spiritually and ethically, and particularly able to draw relevance to their own lives, and offer their personal response to what they believe. Their positive conduct in lessons and around the school reflects this.

c) How well pupils lead, respond to and participate in the Prayer Life of the School

- All pupils irrespective of faith background participate fully, and feel included, in the prayer life of the school. They show reverence, attentiveness, and willingness to play their part, singing with enthusiasm. Not all pupils are involved in the planning and preparation of their liturgies and assemblies. They now have the emergent role modelling of the chaplaincy team, who themselves need to develop confidence and organising skills. As the teachers also become more confident in letting them take the initiative, so the pupils, will become more confident in taking more ownership of the prayer life of the school.
- The pupils value the many prayer opportunities during the school day, be it at the beginning of every lesson or the end of the day. They compose their own heartfelt prayers and reflections which are displayed on the prayer tables, and the use of the prayer bags is becoming popular.

The sacramental and liturgical life of the school is reflected in the assemblies, the Masses, and the celebrations throughout the Church's liturgical year of the life of Jesus and the saints.

- Pupils' sacramental understanding is developed particularly through the First Holy Communion programme which is delivered through the parish and topics such as Baptism and Ordination.

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

Grade 3

a) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

- Leaders and governors have sustained the Catholic ethos of the school since the last inspection, but have not managed to embed fully the processes to promote and monitor the school's Catholic life. There were significant challenges in the governing body, which were resolved by key changes effected during 2015-16.
- The governing body is becoming more involved in school life, but is not yet a fully knowledgeable, challenging, and practical influence on the Catholic life of the school. They meet all the statutory, canonical, and diocesan requirements. They have taken part in training provided by the diocese, and the experienced RE link governor has been actively putting in place robust and rigorous processes of self-evaluation, working closely with the recently appointed subject leader for RE.
- There is at least one Inset day annually devoted specifically to Catholic life and spirituality. Leaders are very open to advice and support from outside agencies, including the diocese, and are reaching out to the other Catholic schools in the Catholic hub. This will benefit the school enormously.
- While the school has elicited feedback from parents and pupils it is unclear how this data is used, where it appears in the school improvement plan, and what impact it has had on improvement for provision and outcomes. Parents spoken to were positive about the school in terms of its welcome and care for their children.
- A mission statement review would be a fruitful exercise, particularly encouraging pupils to be an integral part of a re interpretation of what it means for them.

b) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the curriculum for Religious Education and relationship education, and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

- Leaders and governors are now being presented with data and monitoring information to help them exercise better oversight of the curriculum and learning outcomes. This is work in progress. The new RE leader has done a remarkable job in a very short period, but it is evident from a scrutiny of governor's minutes, that there has in the past been very few challenging questions, and answers expected, regarding the quality and impact of the RE provision. For

example, assessment ladders which have not been used; or an understanding of expected progress in RE.

- Subject development plans are drawn up and increasingly used as working documents. They could be even further refined from general aims to more specific measurable objectives to be achieved over a stated time.
- The provision for staff induction and in service training is supportive of the teaching of RE. This provision, through CPD, includes development of assessment skills, planning, and Theology for Teachers courses which staff attended.
- There have as yet been no lesson observations in RE, but these are planned. Learning walks and book scrutinies by the link governor and RE subject leader are providing a sound basis for moving forward and driving up standards in achievement and teaching.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 3

a) The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching across the school requires improvement to be good overall. There is some good practice which is effective in promoting purposeful learning, the engagement of the pupils, their enjoyment, and good progress. Learning assistants are involved in planning lessons with the teacher, in order that interventions have a positive effect.
- There is however a significant amount of ineffectual teaching, where teachers talk overmuch, have low expectations of pupils intellectual effort, and stunt progress by setting low level tasks which effectively have little challenge, especially for the more able pupils. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to learn more about the Catholic faith and other religions.
- Pupils are able to relate what they are learning to their own lives. Learning from religion is a real growing strength of the school, and something to build on especially through group and whole class discussions where pupils can take ownership and contribute towards their own and their peers' learning. The more common paired chat is short and not always fruitful.
- Opportunities are frequently missed to challenge the pupils to write more creatively and reflectively on what they are learning, rather than simply re-telling stories or writing out explanations and definitions. There are some good examples; in Year 4 work of thoughtful reflective writing, with empathy and real understanding of what the scripture stories mean. Pupils readily ask the question 'What does it mean for me?'
- The assessment and marking policies are becoming embedded, with good practice in some classes. However, the scrutiny of pupils' written work suggests much dialogue marking is making little impact on progress over time, either because the teacher's formative comment is not challenging or the pupil's response is cursory. Teachers on occasion do not check the accuracy of pupils' responses, marking as correct statements such as 'Easter is a time of preparation'.
- Teachers will become more adept at assessing progress with the support of shared moderation with the other schools in the Catholic cluster. At the moment the assessment ladders are not always being used effectively.

b) The extent to which the Curriculum promotes pupils' learning

- The RE curriculum meets all Bishops Conference requirements. It is broad and balanced so that pupils can explore and develop their own values and beliefs. They explore themes such as fairness, compassion and injustice, which they then link to the objects of their charity fundraising, and outreach to others in society who are more needy.
- The study of other world faiths is a key element of this inclusive school because it promotes tolerance, understanding, and respect for others beliefs. It also inculcates an appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures. Provision for sex and relationship education is in place and approved by the governors adhering to diocesan guidelines.
- The curriculum design promotes continuity and progress, but sometimes these are broken between the key stages because the quality of teaching is not consistent and progress is slowed.
- The curriculum promotes spiritual, moral and vocational development and is taught through the lens of the Faith. The sacramental preparation programme for First Holy Communion takes place in the parish and supported by the school.
- Pupils have the opportunity to go on retreat days, such as the pilgrimage to Glastonbury, and are planning to celebrate and honour the Fatima relics.

c) The quality of the Prayer life provided by the School

- The prayer life of the school is fully inclusive. Classes attend Mass once a month, and four times a year the school is invited to join the parish Sunday Mass. Prayer punctuates the school day and is part of every celebration, although it is unclear how many assemblies any one class has a week. There is now a focus on encouraging more pupils to organise and lead collective worship- the Rosary Club is a successful example of this.
- There are some colourful and thought provoking displays around the school, such as the lovely wall hangings in the hall on the themes of Pope Francis' encyclical 'Laudato si '. Perhaps the chaplaincy, monitoring the classroom and corridors, will encourage even more prominent and eye- catching displays which remind the whole community of the liturgical cycle and the topics the pupils are currently studying. This, in turn, will demonstrate more vividly the school's Catholic character and witness.
- Parents and carers are invited to attend Mass and assemblies, which they increasingly do, and they are kept informed of the liturgical cycle as well as the topics the children are exploring in RE through the school website and Newsletter.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

The 96 returned questionnaires scrutinised were in the main positive about the school and the quality of their children's education. Some typical responses included:

'I think the current leader of RE is doing a really good job and seems genuinely interested and appreciative of the children's knowledge'.

'The school is becoming more visually Catholic which is positive... it does not shy away from promoting faith in the life of the school. I think the prayer bags, Rosary group, trips to Holy Mass are a positive, recent addition'.

'Definitely high level of tolerance for children from different countries, and understanding their needs'.

'The Red Hats encourage pupils to look out for the younger school children..... good ties to the local church'.

'I chose St. Louis for both my children as it is a Catholic school and all staff and children can talk about faith a lot..... they are all one big family'.

'RE has greater prominence now with the new RE lead in place'.

'The school is improving and things like RE displays and prayer foci are more prominent.... I have noticed more prayer at celebrations/assemblies'.

'It has a warm family atmosphere and staff and students are aware of each other's needs and concerns'.