



INSPECTION REPORT

St. Augustine's Catholic Primary School

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Headteacher: Mr Peter Upton
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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: July 18-19th 2012

Date of previous inspection: June 2009

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington

Description of School

St. Augustine's is an oversubscribed, average size primary school with 306 pupils on roll, 64% of whom are Catholic. The majority of children are drawn from the parish of St. Augustine and St. John Fisher as well as from further afield. There is a varied socio economic background in this mainly White British area, with a growing ethnic minority and some pupil mobility. Number of SEND children is below average. Attainment on entry is broadly average. Of the staff 67% are Catholic.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

St. Augustine's is effective in providing a good Catholic education for all its pupils. It is a fully inclusive community whose ethos is characterised by openness to all, with strong and close links to the parents, the parish, and the wider community. Pupils participate enthusiastically in and respond well to the good faith enriching provision for prayer life and liturgy. Outcomes from the religious education programme are satisfactory.. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as the others, because of effective interventions, extra support in lessons, and some tasks suited to their learning needs. The religious education programme makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

Grade 3

The school's capacity to sustain the quality of care and education it provides is satisfactory, and there is a discernible trend of improvement in its overall performance. The school has focussed with some success on improving certain areas for development noted at the last inspection, for example, to improve pupils' understanding of Scripture, but has not made sufficient inroads into designing written tasks to reflect the whole range of assessment with challenge for the more able pupils. There is also insufficient evidence to suggest that formative assessment is having an impact on improved levels of achievement. Recent staffing uncertainty about the post of religious education coordinator slowed the rate of progress in these areas, but the school is taking a more realistic, self evaluative approach under the new, shared role of religious coordinator, and moving in the right direction. The processes for managing the performance of staff and for their professional development are satisfactory but need a more knowledgeable, 'hands on' support and challenge from governors and senior leaders to raise levels of achievement to good and better.

What the school should do to improve further

- Governors and senior leaders to make themselves more knowledgeable about RE outcomes, especially progress over time, so as to offer both challenge and real support for the RE coordinator role.

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- To provide more opportunities for extended writing, so that pupils can write at length and more reflectively on what they are learning, drawing on their developing knowledge and understanding of Scripture.
 - Ensure at least one Inset day has as its specific focus the Catholic life of the school and its mission in the wider context of the Church.

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

Grade 2

Pupils are fully involved in the Catholic life of the school and make a positive contribution to it, not least by their excellent behaviour, which contributes to their own learning and the ethos of the school. Although they have opportunities to feedback to staff on their views and perceptions, they have yet to become involved formally in an examination and reflection on what the school mission means to them, and entails for them in their own lives. They feel their voice is heard through pupils' conferencing and they take responsibility for their own lives and the care of the younger children. They absorb easily the shared values lived out in the Catholic ethos of the school and have a sound awareness of spiritual and moral matters which they are able to articulate well. They show conviction in their Faith and speak easily of their spirituality through their own prayers and some brief reflective writing. They respond generously to the needs of others beyond the school, and this makes a valuable contribution to the welcoming openness and inclusivity of the school. Many are involved in fundraising for a variety of charities both home and overseas, for instance, lively communication and support for their buddies in India, as well as outreach to the local community and local charities, such as the Parish soup run, and supporting the homeless in Bristol.

Their response to and participation in the prayer life of the school is good. They are beginning to enjoy the opportunity to learn the skills of planning and preparing assemblies and Masses in school, becoming more involved as they go through the school and moving beyond just being participants or onlookers. They play an active part in liturgies, sing joyously, and compose very beautiful and heartfelt prayers which are collected, kept in the reflective corner of the classroom, and are said daily. Their demeanour and reverence at prayer demonstrates a seriousness and growing faith, as well as a sense of the sacred and the special time for prayer. Even the youngest know the special-ness of prayer and can sit in reflective silence even in the whole school assembly.

Achievement and progress in religious education is satisfactory throughout the school. Prior attainment on entry is broadly average, and by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils attain in line with what is expected. Learning outcomes for all groups of pupils, especially those with special educational needs and those with EAL are satisfactory. Pupils can discuss the topics they cover and relate them to their own lives, but at a simple level. They have, however, a sound grasp of the main tenets of the Faith, for instance, the significance of the Last Supper, or the divinity of Jesus, as well as understanding the message of Jesus through His miracles and parables. Achievement is no better than satisfactory, however, because high expectation and challenge is inconsistent in the mainly satisfactory teaching, although there is some good practice which needs to be shared. Also the quality and presentation of written work is variable, with some good examples among the satisfactory. In lessons pupils work hard and enjoy the subject, taking a genuine interest in learning about the Faith and the faiths of others, but the more able need more challenge to develop their independent learning skills, and in the case of the less able, better pitched tasks to support their learning.

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

Grade 2

Good leadership and management promote the Catholic life of the school very effectively, with frequent appraisal, and focussed planning for future improvement. The Catholic ethos of the school colours all of its activities and its distinctive character is apparent to even the casual visitor. Nevertheless, governors and senior leaders must ensure that at least one Inset day is devoted specifically to the Catholic life and mission of the school community. A whole school revisit of the mission, giving the pupils themselves the opportunity to couch the mission statement and their role in it in their own words, would be a very fruitful re vitalising and focussing exercise. The school has willingly embraced diocesan training for all staff, for example the Theology for Teachers course, an indication of its commitment to improvement. Prayer life and liturgies are monitored and reviewed very effectively, with close liaison between governors and senior leadership. The head teacher reports to the governing body on the quality of Catholic life at every governors' meeting, and in the school development plan objectives are linked closely to performance management. Less effective are the processes for monitoring and evaluating achievement and attainment in the subject RE, where leadership and management could make a huge difference with a more hands on approach through lesson observation and book scrutiny. The school is aware of this and planning accordingly. The effectiveness of the vision for the future is seen in the high morale of the hard working, dedicated staff, the pupil's good care for one another, and the very good relationships between staff and pupils.

The governing body is made up of supportive members who are committed to sustaining the distinctive Catholic ethos and standards, and are able to visit the school and some lessons when they possibly can. Governors who attend the diocesan training are able to bring back and share the knowledge gained with the rest of the body. They have clear systems for seeking the views of parents and pupils and mechanisms for acting on these. For instance, the 32 replies from the Parental Questionnaire were almost all positive and indicated how pleased these parents were with the school. The governors have supported the school well during the protracted staffing uncertainty, and the link governor for Religious education, who is also the parish priest, is a frequent and welcome visitor. The governing body as a whole, however, needs to make itself more closely aware of the work that the school is doing so that it can provide real challenge and critical support. All statutory and canonical responsibilities are met.

There is a clear policy promoted by governors and senior staff to promote community cohesion with the result that the school has an openness to all, all are included in its life, and its generous outreach to the local and the global community is a real strength. There is a common sense of belonging, and parents from different backgrounds are involved as fully as possible. The school collaborates well with other schools and participates in community undertakings, including local charities, for example, the soup run. Pupils share their experiences with their counterparts in Poland and their generous support for the orphanage school in India. The curriculum provides a clear exploration of other faiths, and good use is made of resources. Those of other denominations or faiths feel that they are able to express their own beliefs comfortably, and all feel included and welcomed into every aspect of school life. Parents from all backgrounds, especially those from other cultures are welcomed and supported.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 3

Provision for prayer life is good, a strength of the school, because it meets very effectively the spiritual needs of the pupils, be it through assemblies and liturgies, or the opportunities for reflection. The school supports the parish- run preparation programme for First Holy Communion. There are many occasions during the day for spiritual nourishment through prayer and moments of reflection. The liturgical year is well marked, planned, and celebrated, particularly Advent, Lent and Holy Week, for example, the Stations of the Cross. Then each event is evaluated and reviewed to determine how it could be bettered and made more relevant and engaging. Although the parish church is a just walkable distance from the school, it is a well used resource both for joint parish Masses and for general RE topics.

The curriculum successfully meets the needs of all groups of pupils, as well as meeting the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education requirements, such as the allocation of time. Relationship education is dealt with sensitively and clearly from a Catholic standpoint.

The new syllabus God Matters was introduced at the start of the year and has gone well thanks to the hard work of the RE coordinators; and this on top of their recently taking up the post and having to support teachers through the changes. The second year should see it becoming embedded and having more impact. The beliefs of other faiths are explored through topics in the schemes of work. Resources are well managed, and ICT, art and music particularly are used imaginatively to colour and enrich the learning experience. The colourful art work and displays around the school reinforce the RE topics or liturgical seasons the pupils are studying, they affirm the creators and educate others, and visibly declare the Catholic ethos of the school. Striking examples are the Indian link display, and the fishermen Apostles with their nets. Resources to support teaching, and to enliven and enrich the schemes of work, are satisfactory. The curriculum makes a very positive contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. The provision could be further enriched by providing the opportunity for older pupils to go on retreat.

The quality of teaching and purposeful learning is in the main satisfactory, with some good practice observed. Good elements of teaching enabled the pupils to learn well because they engaged their interest and provided challenge, for instance, in a Year 6 lesson, where pupils had to research the topic and present it to others. The more common, less effective teaching saw the teachers doing most of the talking and the activity often became the key element of the lesson, a task driven approach rather than teaching for meaning. There is generally little expectation of real intellectual effort from the pupils, nor much concern about how they present their work. The scrutiny of written work shows that marking is inconsistent, sometimes helpful in pointing towards ways to improve, but more often lacking any challenge or expectation of real effort and care over their assignments. Teaching assistants provide satisfactory support in allowing the teacher to split children into smaller groups with some differentiated tasks tailored to their learning needs.

Assessment procedures are in place but the process is very much in its infancy, in terms of impact on attainment and achievement, despite formative assessment being a target area for development at the last inspection. Initial use is being made of levels to begin to monitor individual progress and achievement, with Inset training already planned for the autumn term, and things are moving in the right direction. Baseline assessment tests need to be introduced to get a clear picture of pupils' starting points and therefore progress through the school. Assessment and tracking of pupil progress are initially information gathering exercises, and what needs to follow close behind is the implementation of this data to inform teaching and learning objectives. The school is aware that this data must now be translated into the lesson

plans and lesson objectives in order to meet the specific learning needs of every pupil, as well as linked to the new God Matters syllabus learning objectives.