



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOHN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BANBURY

Inspection dates 12th-13th March 2007
Reporting Inspector Mr Joseph Skivington

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic Primary
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	289
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Fr. Mervyn Tower
School address	Avocet Way Banbury Oxfordshire OX16 9YA
Telephone number	01295 263740
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E-mail address	headteacher.3350@st-johns-banbury.oxon.sch.uk
Parish	St John the Evangelist Banbury
Date of previous inspection	February 2002

Headteacher Mr K G O'Connor



Description of the school

St John's is an average size Catholic primary school serving the parish of St John the Evangelist. Pupils come from range of socio-economic backgrounds, predominantly White British, with a recent increase in the number of pupils from other ethnic groups where English is an additional language. There are 298 pupils on roll, almost all baptised Catholics (98.2%). The school is currently oversubscribed and looking to expand its provision. Attendance is above average. Prior attainment levels in religious knowledge are well within what is expected nationally. There are close links with the parish and the local Catholic secondary school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

St. John's is a good school with outstanding features. Led by the governors, the headteacher and senior staff it excels in its provision for the Catholic life and worship of the pupils. The support of good practising Catholic parents, in partnership with the school, is key to the very sound spiritual and moral development of their children. The number of families attending Mass on Sundays is impressive. The provision for prayer and liturgical participation is first rate for both pupils and staff. The quality of the provision for religious education is good. From a good base pupils achieve well and standards reached are generally above national expectations. The good teaching results in good learning. The curriculum is well balanced and enriched. The progress of pupils is monitored, but work is still in progress to increase the impact of assessment for learning. Leadership and management of the subject are both good.

Grade: 2

Improvement since the last inspection

Areas noted for development at the last inspection included providing individual targets for pupils, and improving the range, quality and quantity of written work. While good work has been done in the interim, the quantity of written work in religious education needs to be increased further. Assessment procedures are in place and selected individual pupils are tracked. Good progress has been made in developing a relationship programme.

Grade: 2

Capacity to improve

The school has identified areas for improvement and these are incorporated into the development plan with achievable time scales. The new religious education co-ordinator has been in post fully only since January and, although not a specialist in the subject, has the capacity to move the subject forward, with valuable support from the previous co-ordinator and help and advice from the diocese. The governing body has initiated a review of the school's mission statement to bring a fresh focus and new dynamism to the work of the school. The capacity to improve is good.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that the individual progress of all pupils is closely monitored and that the marking of their work challenges them and shows them how to improve

- encourage pupils to express their thoughts more creatively and extensively through more extended writing opportunities

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school is exemplary. The governors give an excellent steer particularly in their attention to the Catholic foundation of the school and have recently instigated a review of the mission statement. The headteacher is a popular figure and excels in developing the prayer life and spiritual development of the pupils and this serves to reinforce the good Catholic background of the majority of the pupils. The staff pray together before the start of the day and this sets the tone for the whole school community. The quality of the school's self evaluation of its Catholic life is good and this is reflected in its constant search to improve and develop the pupils' spiritual and moral life. The staff at all levels provides excellent support and role-modelling for the pupils, as well as promoting high quality care and the pupils' education.

Grade: 1

Collective Worship

The provision for prayer and collective worship is equal to the best. There are many opportunities for prayer and reflection. The liturgical life of the school is well planned, with regular Masses in which all the pupils participate with enthusiasm, and the sacramental preparation, in close collaboration with parents and parish, is very thorough. Spiritual and moral development grows through liturgical celebration. The pupils are nurtured by daily teaching and example, the homilies and exhortations in Mass and assemblies, and reflection on the parables and miracles in the life of Jesus. The pupils develop a keen sense of right and wrong. The message of the Gospels is internalised and then realised in their excellent behaviour and considerate care for one another. Other significant Catholic practices find their place in the school year, such as the splendid May processions, voluntary prayer groups, and the promotion of the frequent recitation of the Rosary.

Grade: 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Pupils join the school with a sound background in religious knowledge, because of their mainly good, active Catholic family backgrounds. By the time they leave for secondary education their attainment levels are above average. This represents good achievement. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well because of the extra support provided by teaching assistants. These enable the classes to be split into smaller groups so that the learning needs of all the pupils can be met, particularly those with special educational needs. By the end of Year 1 more able pupils can retell stories such as the Wedding Feast at Cana and can explain in simple terms the significance of Baptism. In Year 2 they can identify parts of the Mass as well as a variety of religious symbols. There are examples of empathetic writing, as in the story of Zacchaeus, by the more able, but written work generally is very minimal with little personal response from the pupils themselves. Attainment at the end of Year 2 is in line with expectation.

In Year 3 pupils show they can write sensitively when given the opportunity, as in well-written pieces on Abraham, the widow of Naim, and Jewish festivals. Pupils in Year 4 produce thoughtful prayers and empathetic writing, such as the donkey's account of the Nativity. Symbolism is well understood, as in light and candle. Key concepts are well grasped. In Year 5 and Year 6 there are interesting, thoughtful commentaries in response to religious art and a re-write of the Good Samaritan as a modern day parable. Also, there are some thoughtful ideas on discipleship. There is a general paucity of extended writing in pupils' books, although assessment pieces indicate pupils' knowledge and understanding at this stage to be above average in the main. In conversation more able pupils showed a good understanding of the main tenets of the faith. Lower ability pupils were less confident in expressing themselves.

Grade: 2

Quality of Provision for Religious Education

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning are good, with both excellent and satisfactory aspects observed. The best teaching was challenging, involving the pupils and leading them skilfully to arrive at the answer by their own intellectual effort. Pupils work well and respond to challenge and high expectation. Where teaching has aspects which are less than good, there is too much subject matter in the lesson plan and the less able pupils flounder. A variety of effective strategies are used in lessons, such as drama and hot seating and excellent use is made of the interactive white board to involve pupils in their own learning. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons but the work is sometimes not challenging enough for the more able, who cited copying, writing out and drawing as the less interesting aspects of lessons. The quality and effectiveness of teachers' marking is inconsistent and often does not really show pupils how they can improve.

Curriculum

The curriculum follows the diocesan guidelines. The relationship education programme has been revised in line with the governors' policy. Further enrichment includes strong links with shared activities with other schools, visits from the CAFOD and Father Hudson representatives and a project with the school newspaper focusing on Easter around the world. There is colourful photographic evidence of the success of the multi-faith week.

Grade: 2

Leadership and Management of Religious Education

Leadership and management of religious education are good. The new co-ordinator, with invaluable support, is settling into the role well and is addressing the subject priorities in the development plan. There is an eagerness to adopt the best practice and to seek advice. Very much at the centre of the planning is the working out of the school's mission through the teaching of religious education. Assessment procedures are in place, but they need to provide more specific targets to raise individual achievement and inform teaching and learning. The school is waiting on the diocese to provide level indicators for them. Attention also needs to be given to ensuring the marking of written work is consistent over all years and that it actually shows pupils how they can improve. Resources are good and well used, particularly information technology. The governors fulfil their duties towards religious education well. All statutory requirements are met.

Grade: 2

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 unsatisfactory.	School Overall
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Overall Effectiveness

The overall effectiveness of the provision for the Catholic life of the school and religious education	2
The effectiveness of any steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	2
The capacity to make necessary improvements	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2

The Catholic Life of the School

The effectiveness of leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school	1
How well the governing body fulfils its role in relation to the school's Catholic foundation	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality care and education	2
The quality of the leadership of the headteacher and senior staff in leading and developing the Catholic life of the school	1
How effectively leadership at all levels in the school promotes learners' spiritual and moral development	1
How effectively the school monitors and evaluates its Catholic life	1

Collective Worship

The quality of Collective Worship	1
The quality of the provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school	1
Pupils' response to the school's provision	1
How well collective worship contributes to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils	1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**Achievement and standards**

How well pupils achieve	2
The standards reached by pupils in RE	2
Pupils' progress in their work	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2
How well pupils enjoy their work in RE	2
The contribution pupils make to the school community	1
Pupils' behaviour	1

Quality of Provision

Quality of provision for religious education	2
How well teaching promotes good learning in RE and meets the needs of all pupils	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
How well provision promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development	1

Leadership and Management of RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management of RE	2
How well the subject leader supports and leads staff in raising achievement and promoting high quality RE	2
How well performance is monitored and evaluated leading to clear priorities for improvement	3
The adequacy and management of resources for RE	2
The extent to which governors discharge their responsibilities towards religious education	2