



INSPECTION REPORT

St. Francis Catholic Primary School
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DfE Number: 802/3350
URN: 109239

Headteacher: Mrs Catherine Hunt
Chair of Governors: Mrs Ann Tarr

**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: 27-28th February 2020
Date of previous inspection: January 2015

Reporting Inspector: Mr J Skivington
Additional Inspector: Mrs A Fowler

Description of school

St Francis is a one form entry Catholic Primary school in Nailsea, serving the parishes of St. Francis, Nailsea, and The Immaculate Conception, Clevedon. It is a member of the Newman Catholic Schools Partnership. There are 189 pupils on roll, 56.1% of whom are Catholic, 20.6% are from minority ethnic groups and have English as an Additional Language (EAL), and 7% have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)/Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP). Only one pupil receives the Pupil Premium. The school has experienced considerable staff turnover since the last inspection. The present head teacher took up the substantive post in April 2019 after, as deputy head, covering the absence of the then head teacher for over a year. The school received a RE monitoring visit in January 2018.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 3

- Pupils have a sense of pride in their school and enjoy coming to school
- There are growing links with the parishes which enhance the religious life of the school
- The pupils' growing involvement in the planning and evaluation of the prayer life of the school is developing and pupils, irrespective of background, feel able to participate.
- The behaviour of pupils towards each other in lessons and around the school, is excellent.
- The pupils' systematic and planned contribution to the evaluation of the Catholic life of the school requires improvement.
- Assessment in RE is not yet effective in supporting future planning and pupil progress nor is the overall quality of teaching in RE.
- Leadership and management, in terms of monitoring and evaluation of the quality and impact of the provision for Catholic life is not sufficiently systematic or embedded.
- Whilst governors are committed to both the Catholic life of the school and the teaching of RE the monitoring and evaluation of these aspects is not sufficiently embedded or rigorous.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is not yet secure.

- Whilst there had been good work undertaken in addressing the areas of development noted in the previous inspection immediately following the inspection, as a result of recent staff changes this has not continued and has taken a backward step.
- Systems and processes to monitor and evaluate Catholic life and RE have not been sufficiently rigorous in order to provide clear evidence of the positive impact actions have had, or to provide detailed informed action based reliable data. However, the present leadership and staff who are relatively young and new to teaching RE, are highly committed to fulfilling the mission of the school and making improvements. They are

successfully undertaking, with enthusiasm and determination, the relevant training and courses to improve their subject knowledge and expertise. Their morale is positive, and they speak with gratitude about the support and guidance they receive. Parental approval, appreciation, and support for the school is unanimous.

What the school should do to improve further

- Governors to develop a more systematic and critical approach to the monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life and curriculum RE.
- Ensure consistency of practice in the assessment of RE so that data is reliable and therefore able to be used effectively in planning for RE.
- Re-evaluate the opportunities to develop the cultural awareness of pupils, and their deeper understanding of other faiths in the UK today.

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

- Pupils appreciate the Catholic life of the school, as expressed in the school's new logo: 'Together with Christ,' and they respond positively when encouraged, such as the successful Faith in Action initiative. They are able to articulate what is special about being in a Catholic school, and when asked thought that they were given opportunities to express their opinions. Their understanding of the mission statement of the school is not well developed and they have had little time to explore the newly introduced values. Pupils do not contribute in a planned and systematic way to the school's own evaluation of its Catholic life, or to take a lead in planning improvements to the Catholic life of the school
- The pupils' excellent behaviour, conduct and attitudes around the school reflect its Catholic character. Their care for one another, particularly the older pupils for the younger children through the Playground Pals, is an embedded behaviour and demonstrates the values inculcated by the school. They willingly assume roles of responsibility when they are offered, and through this have a growing understanding of vocation. The prayer team in particular, have opportunities to work with other schools in the Newman partnership
- Most pupils accept the responsibilities of living in a Catholic school community. They take on positions of responsibility through the school council and the chaplaincy team which have merged into three groups responsible for prayer life, eco living and charity outreach. They are learning how to record and minute their meetings and evaluate the impact of their projects and activities.
- Pupils regularly present class-led assemblies to the whole school and monitor the interactive prayer tables/stations around the school. They are increasingly initiating and running their own fundraising activities, for example Children in Need, Harvest Breakfast, Rainbow Raffle supporting CAFOD and Mission Together, Fundraising for Refugees, but also outreach in the local community with visits to the elderly.
- The links with the parishes are being strengthened and some pupils are involved in animating the Sunday Masses. The parish priests are a welcome and supportive presence in the school both in terms of liturgies and theological support for teachers in deepening theirs, and the children's, understanding of the Faith.
- Pupils are happy, feel safe, and respond well to the school's strong pastoral support. They are aware of British values but cannot always articulate them. Their knowledge and understanding of other cultures, as well as their understanding of other religions is not sufficiently developed. They have had little opportunity to visit other places of worship or meet representatives from other faiths.

b) The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The school's mission and Catholic ethos are at the centre of all the school does and this is very evident in the environment and the colourful displays around the school. However, the school website does not highlight sufficiently the Catholic nature of the school and there are no RE or Worship policies on the site.
- St. Francis is a welcoming and inclusive community where all are valued and invited to participate. As a result, all have a strong sense of belonging to a community. The displays around the school indicate the pupils have a sense of their place in the wider Church and worldwide issues.
- Pastoral support and care are given to all and this is effectively modelled by governors, senior leaders and all adults involved in the children's lives. All staff are supported through modelling and provided with CPD to understand the Catholic nature of the school. As a result, they become fully committed to its mission and become real role models for the children.
- A new Relationships and Sex Education programme is planned and will be in place for the start of the new term in September 2020. The PSHE programme is also being updated with new resources for September. The curriculum review indicated that not all British values such as diversity and racism were being fulfilled.
- The school provides many opportunities for the pupil's spiritual and moral development across the curriculum
- Provision and new ideas are supported by the school's involvement with the local Catholic Schools Newman Partnership. Staff have been in receipt of inset training provided by the diocese as a means to nurture and improve the quality of Catholic life and involvement in the wider mission of the Church and to live out the values and aims embedded in Catholic Social teaching.

c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- Leaders and governors are strongly committed to promoting the Catholic identity of the school as their first priority, and they are closely involved in the school. There are growing links with the parishes and both leadership and governors regularly attend Sunday Masses and parish functions. They offer excellent models of good practice as leaders of Catholic life.
- The quality and frequency of induction and CPD for staff to develop their understanding and commitment to the Church's and the school's mission is good, with Inset both in school, and with the Catholic Schools partnership. Evaluation of the impact of these Insets and programmes is still work in progress.
- The governors do not monitor the quality of Catholic life regularly, and it is rarely mentioned in the Governors Minutes. They visit the school and attend assemblies and liturgies both formally and informally, but their evaluation of Catholic life, in

terms of the quality and impact on pupils' and staffs' spiritual and moral development, and their understanding of it, is not systematically planned or recorded. The school's own self-evaluation notes show that there is no separate report on RE or Catholic life to the governing body.

- Governors are aware of the Pastoral Vision for the Diocese - Future full of Hope - and keep themselves involved through diocesan training, such as the Foundation Governors Focus day. They are open to advice and collaboration with the other partner Catholic schools in the Newman Schools Partnership.

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

- The lesson observations and book scrutiny during the inspection show that there is wide variability between levels of progress and achievement throughout the school. The school has begun moderating RE work, in conjunction with other schools in the partnership, in order to establish firm criteria for assessment, but the school does not yet have a reliable data base to make secure judgements on overall levels of achievement. It is also not clear from pupil's assessed work where the difference between expected progress and greater depth lies.
- Pupils come to the school from varied backgrounds, but most come in with expected levels of knowledge and understanding. As a result of effective teaching and a creative use of drama, role play, and art, they make good progress from their starting points. Their factual recall was above average. However, this standard has not been sustained as the children move on up through the school. The introduction of the Learning Journey at the start and finish of each module is a positive and successful measure of progress but is not yet consistently used. Good and better progress is evident in Years 5 and 6 linked to more experienced and effective teaching, with evidence of AT3 learning and greater depth work.
- Pupils with special educational needs or with disabilities make similar progress to other pupils because of the help they receive from very supportive teaching assistants, and planned intervention. Pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) quickly catch up with their peers in terms of literacy and also make similar progress.
- There are examples of learning through group work: for instance, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils had the task of interpreting an artist's Hunger Cloth painting, which generated discussion and interpretation of symbolism, while Year 6 explored the conversion of St. Paul, using religious terms with understanding, and demonstrating their bible referencing skills.
- In conversation pupils are hesitant and although their religious literacy, especially with regard to scripture, develops well as they go through the school, there are gaps in understanding key concepts in the later years. Learning Objectives are not always clear and at times do not reflect the outcomes for RE. At times the work taking place within the lesson does not fully reflect the learning outcome. They are, however, better able to make the link between belief and action, between the topics they are studying, and their own lives and experiences. This is evident in their excellent caring behaviour towards others.
- Pupils say - with different levels of enthusiasm - that they enjoy their RE lessons, and in lessons they work well in pairs, and in groups. Their presentation of written work is variable in its neatness and quality, reflecting both the level of care and

interest they take in their work, and the level of teachers' expectations. There are opportunities missed to encourage them to write more reflectively and in depth, supporting their statements with quotations and examples from the Scriptures.

- The school's current data on progress and achievement of pupils is not reliable and does not always match the written work scrutinised in the pupils' books. Their verbal input into discussions and other tasks could fruitfully be referenced by teachers to secure recorded evidence of their achievement and progress. Assessment for learning is effective when teachers plan closely with the teaching assistants specially to support weaker learners.
- Moderation of assessed work, starting with Year 6, has begun in joint moderation sessions with the other Newman partner schools. This system will prove beneficial when the emerging data is reliable, and also more useful to governors and teachers if the planned traffic light method is introduced.

b) The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching is variable, and this is reflected in the enjoyment and progress of the pupils. However, the teachers have embraced the challenge of teaching RE with great determination and are totally committed to the ethos of the school. They are proactive in seeking advice and training in order to develop and deepen their understanding. They are now using a good range of strategies including art, music, drama and role play which the pupils enjoy, and which helps them to learn.
- The school is fully aware of teachers' confidence levels in teaching the subject, and it is a developmental objective with Inset both in the school and through diocesan training and courses.
- Where teaching is good and better, teachers have a good rapport with the pupils and have high expectations of effort. Questioning is strong where it checks understanding, as well as challenging pupils to think more deeply providing reasons for their opinions and making links to scripture and their life experience. Where pupils are not challenged to think and question, they come away with a lot of unrelated facts that they cannot easily put into a context.
- The marking policy does not always challenge and direct the pupils' learning. This is evidenced in the varying quality of the teachers' comments and the pupils' responses. Some comments are purely congratulatory and do not offer the pupils opportunity to improve their work or to provide real challenge to think and write independently.

c) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- The evaluation of RE provision is an area of leadership and management which urgently needs to be improved, and this in turn will depend on a much closer

monitoring of provision and outcomes to provide more secure and reliable data. Through largely unavoidable circumstances caused by staff turnover and changing roles, the governors have not been proactive enough in rectifying a fragmenting situation.

- Although there are systems in place to monitor and evaluate RE, there has been little effective monitoring of teaching and learning, apart from a report by the link governor for RE on the Catholicity of the corridor displays, but there is no evidence of reports on learning, behaviour, quality of written work and presentation of books. There is no evidence of discussion about RE or Catholic life in the governors' minutes. The head teacher has had to step in and conduct the lesson observations as the RE coordinator has not been involved in lesson observations over the last year because of a reorganisation of responsibilities.
- Governors have little understanding of the data presented to them and rely heavily on what the headteacher reports back to them, with little question or challenge. They have neglected to take the opportunity to find out and appraise themselves as to what they must look out for and query.
- The school's leadership team are supportive of staff by ensuring they attend and receive appropriate diocesan training to develop their subject knowledge. This is a positive, encouraging sign that improvement is on the way.
- The RE curriculum meets the Bishops' Conference requirements, as well as any additional requirements of the diocesan Bishop. The new diocesan scheme is having a positive and challenging impact and is steadily being adopted. Extracurricular enrichment is in place through some visits, retreats, and collaborative events with partner schools, and these opportunities need to be extended further. Other world religions such as Islam and Judaism are studied discretely, but in no significant depth, and quickly forgotten by the pupils. The development of their awareness of other cultures and faiths in today's Britain needs to be broadened through more comprehensive lessons and more experiences such as visits to other places of worship, and visits from representatives of other faith traditions and other cultures.
- Leaders and governors take into account the views of parents and pupils in evaluating RE through questionnaires and conferencing. Parents are very positive in their feedback to the school and could become even more involved in decision making and partnership. There were 37 parental questionnaires returned which is an indication of their approval, gratitude and close interest in what the governors and leadership are providing for their children. Parents have commented on how St. Francis is a welcoming, fully inclusive community

The Prayer Life of the School

Grade 2

a) How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's prayer life

- Every pupil regardless of faith background feels welcome to participate fully in the school's prayer life and collective worship. The pupils show great reverence during prayer and a willingness to play a part in assemblies and whole school celebrations. Their demeanour, body language, and attentiveness at prayer are outstanding. The classroom meditation in the Early Years was outstanding, the young children still and reflective, and obviously used to this form of prayer. The pupils sang enthusiastically at the close of the whole school worship. Many pupils are also involved significantly in the prayer life and worship in the parish, particularly at the popular Sunday Mass.
- The prayer leaders in the chaplaincy team plan and present whole school collective worship, and nearly all pupils are developing the confidence to do the same in their own class prayers. Planning sheets to guide the pupils in their preparation for worship include review and evaluation, and suggested improvements. This excellent practice is now being securely embedded. Pupils' response to voluntary acts of worship is evident in their setting up of prayer stations, such as the statue of Our Lady.
- The prayer life of the school contributes significantly to the spiritual and moral development of the children. As pupils move through the school there is a corresponding progression in prayer, including the traditional Catholic prayers, and an understanding of the structure of the Mass as well as the liturgical year.
- The prayer areas in each class are a reflective focus for daily prayer and have some examples of the pupils' own prayers in the beautifully presented Class Prayer books, with photographic evidence of their class assemblies. In some classrooms the prayer areas are not prominent in terms of colour, attraction, and impact, with some which are minimally set out; while in other classes traditional prayers, key words in RE, or pupils' own RE work, are not to be seen.
- The parish priests are a frequent and inspirational presence to the whole school community, and there are strong, fruitful prayer links between parish and school. The church is an ideal resource for the pupils and an ideal alternative venue for their special assemblies and liturgies.

b) The quality of the prayer life provided by the school

- The provision for the prayer life of the school makes a vital contribution to the spiritual life of the whole school community, and part and parcel of every school day. This is evident not only in the Masses and assemblies reflecting the Church's liturgical year, but also the school's whole environment, with appropriate statues, colourful displays, and a prayer garden.

- Pupils have a rich diet of prayer which is usually linked to the liturgical seasons, such as the Holy Week workshop, the Passover Meal, carol services, as well as joining the other schools to celebrate St. John Henry Newman's canonisation.
- Older pupils have said that they feel their faith is important to them.
- The centrality of prayer life reaches out to all pupils, regardless of faith or family background, and includes both staff and parents. Significant moments, such as Harvest, Remembrance Day, Advent and Lent, and traditional Catholic practices, are celebrated as a whole community and are well supported by parents and parish. The head teacher is successfully strengthening links with the parish, inviting parents into school Masses and having pupils lead the parish Mass once a term. Retreats are held in year groups with the partner schools, and on other occasions such as a day of Recollection in Clevedon.

c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the prayer life of the school.

- Leaders and governors sustain and nurture the prayer life of the school community well and ensure provision and opportunities for prayer and collective worship are in place. There is evidence of ongoing planning in the school development plans.
- The spirituality of the staff is well supported through training and time for reflection and conversation with RE leaders and the parish priests. They are also supported in planning for worship and so hopefully becoming more knowledgeable about the liturgical rhythm of the Church, and more confident in modelling high quality inspirational presentations.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

Example:

There were 37 parental questionnaires received. All were positive about the school and their children's education, with a small percentage feeling the links between the school and the parishes could be stronger. Some typical responses included:

'I love the way the catholic ethos is subtly brought into everyday life in the school and the children adopt the caring catholic attitude almost without realising it'.

'We love that it is a small school and the years mix together to support each other (buddy system) and it feels like a family'.

'The school has a strong community and a strong pupil led faith. Pupils understand and model Christian and Catholic values and participate fully in liturgy. There is a developed sense of charity and mercy and Christian giving'.

'The community of school/parents is very strong and supportive. Teachers do care about the children - it is evident from their interest and knowledge of every individual. Noticeable steps have been taken by school to address the link between school and church, including termly Sunday school Masses although attendance by pupils is relatively low'.

'St. Francis is a respectful and nurturing school: because it is small it has the capacity to adapt to the children's needs and has embraced individuals' interests. The Christian values add a deep sense of love and care for the children'.

'I like the school's values and its community spirit. We're not a catholic family but have been made to feel very welcome'.