



INSPECTION REPORT

ST GEORGE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
The Mount, Taunton
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DfE Number: 933/3438
URN: 123851

Acting Headteacher: Mrs E McDonnell
Chair of Governors: Mrs H MacConnell

**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: 6th and 7th July 2022
Date of previous inspection: 6th and 7th July 2016

Reporting Inspector: Mrs B McLaughlin
Additional Inspector: Mrs A Barrett

Description of school

St George's is a smaller than average, one-form entry primary school in Taunton. The school serves the designated parishes of St. George, Taunton; St. Teresa of Lisieux, Taunton; St. John Fisher, Wellington; St. Stanislaus, Dulverton and English Martyrs, Chard.

There are 223 children at the school. 80% of children are Catholic. Of the other children at the school, 12% are from other Christian denominations, 2% of other faiths and the remainder have not declared a faith.

The proportion of children with Special Educational Needs is below the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those speaking English as an additional language are well above the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium is below the national average.

The previous headteacher, who started at the school after the last denominational inspection, left to take up a new post in April 2022. The school currently has an acting headteacher, who is the school lead for religious education and chaplaincy. She has been appointed to the permanent headship position for September 2022.

The school is part of Dunstan Partnership of Catholic schools in Somerset.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Good

This is a good school.

- This is a welcoming and nurturing school. Pastoral care for pupils and staff is outstanding.
- Leaders, governors, staff and pupils are strongly committed to the school's Catholic identity and see it as the core of daily life at St George's.
- The school is an inclusive community, where relationships at all levels are positive and pupil behaviour is exemplary.
- Outcomes in religious education are good. Pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress.
- The Religious Education (RE) Lead has a secure vision for teaching and learning and a passionate commitment to the subject area. She is a positive and supportive role model.
- The school is highly regarded by parents. The links between St George's parish and the school are strong and mutually beneficial.

The capacity of the school to improve:

The capacity of the school to improve and develop is good. There is a commitment to continuous growth, which is rooted in the school's identity as a Catholic school, and which is articulated by the acting headteacher and governors. The permanent appointment of the acting headteacher will provide stability and continuity for the future.

The areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection have been fully addressed.

What the school should do to improve further:

- The newly appointed headteacher currently retains her previous role of lead for both RE and chaplaincy. Given the demands placed upon a headteacher, governors should consider reviewing the leadership structure with a view to appointing a new lead for RE and chaplaincy, alongside prioritising self-evaluation and improvement planning of all aspects of the school's Catholic life.
- Leaders and relevant staff should ensure that more pupils across all ages, benefit from the excellent chaplaincy opportunities currently afforded to a relatively small number of older pupils.
- Leaders and relevant staff should create opportunities for pupils to regularly experience, plan and lead a wider variety of methods and styles of prayer.

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

- There is a strong sense of the school being a welcoming and inclusive Catholic community. Children understand the values of the school and the importance of applying them to their daily lives as seen during the inspection, in the whole school focus on service.
- Pupils speak of the positive relationships that exist in the school and value the care and support they receive from the adults in the school and from each other. Older pupils understand that they are role models to younger pupils and strive to set a positive example.
- Pupils participate enthusiastically in activities that support the Catholic life of the school and have a growing understanding of social and ethical issues. They support the local foodbank, have collected items for those affected by the war in Ukraine and have participated in the CAFOD Walk for Water. During the inspection some pupils spoke of collecting litter to help care for God's Earth, while others were preparing faith-based activities for the school Summer Fayre.
- Pupils in years five and six have the opportunity to become school chaplains and also to obtain the Leaders in Faith award. They are proud of their chaplaincy development plan which identifies their involvement in collective worship in the school, their charitable fundraising activities and their monitoring of aspects of the Catholic life of the school. Younger pupils expressed a desire to be able to be included in these chaplaincy opportunities too.
- All pupils are frequently invited to give feedback on different aspects of school life within their classes. Class representatives then participate in the Lunch Bunch, feeding back their views to leaders and governors. In their time at the school, all pupils have the opportunity to be part of the Lunch Bunch.
- Pupils speak positively about the care and support they receive from a range of staff. They respond well to the provision of the school for their physical, emotional and spiritual growth. They particularly value the many clubs and activities that exist. They feel happy and safe and enjoy coming to school.
- Pupils respect and appreciate the strong links with the parish and the support that the parish priest and parishioners provide. They have a sense of being part of the wider church family and they recently contributed to the Synod, sharing their thoughts on the future of the Church.

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

- The school Mission Statement is seen as underpinning the purpose of daily life at the school, and the acting headteacher has recently introduced a greater focus on all pupils understanding how the school helps them "to grow in mind, body and spirit."
- Leaders and governors have created a clear sense of belonging and community. This is evident in the quality of relationships that exist between pupils and staff. Celebration is an important feature of this school community, and whole school and key stage assemblies recognise the achievements of pupils while reinforcing the values of the school.

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- The school environment clearly reflects the school's Catholic identity, with references to the liturgical calendar and gospel values. Prominence is also given to a variety of traditional statues.
 - The school is inclusive and is committed to the social teachings of the Church. The introduction of the language of Catholic Social Teaching is having a positive impact, and links between the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and the life of the school are now made and celebrated in a display in the school hall.
 - Staff are committed to the Catholic life of the school and they are extremely positive role models of respect, care, and forgiveness. They are proactive in creating opportunities for pupils to also show their care and forgiveness to each other.
 - The school is attentive to the pastoral needs of all staff, taking great care to ensure the pastoral needs of staff are understood and catered for.
 - The school has reviewed and updated its Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programmes in line with DfE and diocesan guidelines. Full details of the programme are included on the school website and are shared with parents.
 - The school's website gives a high profile to the Catholic life of the school and includes a section with photographs and information about the chaplaincy team. The website also has all the appropriate policies relating to the faith life of the school and these are regularly reviewed.

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

- Leaders and governors are fully committed to the Catholic life and character of the school and are well regarded by staff, parents, and the wider community.
- The RE lead has established regular systems for monitoring the Catholic life of the school. She seeks feedback from staff, parents and pupils, and analyses and shares the findings with governors. This evaluation would benefit from being included on the whole school monitoring calendar and linked to the school development plan.
- The induction and training provided to staff is good and the school makes use of diocesan training opportunities and resources. The RE lead and parish priest provide formal and informal training and support, which is further supplemented through partnership work.
- The school has strategies for engaging with parents. These include the school website, which gives high priority to the Catholic identity of the school, a weekly newsletter and in-school meetings for parents.
- The school responds very well to diocesan policies and initiatives and is fully involved in the work of the Dunstan Partnership.

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

- Overall, most children, from their varied starting points, make good progress in each key stage, with no significant variation between groups of learners. Pupils with English as an additional language are effectively supported and therefore make progress comparable to other groups. The progress of pupils in religious education was maintained during the period of home learning due to the Covid pandemic.
- The religious literacy of pupils across the key stages is strong and plays a key part in enabling them to grow in their understanding of faith. This was evident in all year groups, where children confidently used key words in response to teacher questioning, as seen in a Year 3 lesson about reconciliation.
- Pupils respond well to opportunities to engage with a variety of learning approaches and activities in religious education. They particularly enjoy drama and art, which they see as helpful to their understanding and of which they would like to do more.
- Pupils respond well to the high expectations and academic challenge of staff. These are consistent across all year groups. They enjoy their religious education lessons and as a result behaviour is excellent.
- Pupils, especially older ones, have many opportunities to write in depth. They take pride in their work as evident not only in its presentation but also in the quality of writing.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how teachers assess their learning and articulate a desire to improve their work. They regularly respond to teacher comments, which help them move their learning further forward.

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

- The RE lead provides strong and focused leadership in religious education. She gives staff ongoing support on the content and teaching of religious education, and as a result staff display high levels of confidence in their delivery of lessons.
- Teachers are enthusiastic in their teaching, and as a result the pupils are enthusiastic too. They communicate high expectations about RE and learning and create a positive and respectful environment for learning, encouraging and celebrating pupils' achievements.
- Teachers structure lessons effectively and skilfully and revisit prior learning at the start of lessons, enabling them to accurately assess pupils and provide appropriate challenge for all learners.
- Teachers are aware of the different needs of pupils in their class, and together with a team of committed teaching assistants, support individual learners. They provide a range of differentiated activities and materials to extend the learning of all pupils.
- Teacher questioning is effective and is frequently focused on extending learning. In the best examples teachers do not just accept the first answer given but push the pupil to

provide more detailed information to demonstrate their understanding, as seen during a Year 4 lesson on the sacraments.

- Teachers provide regular, detailed high-quality feedback to pupils, also providing them with time to respond to it and thus further improve their understanding.
- The learning environment is purposeful and focused. A range of resources are appropriately deployed, with a particular focus on the use of Scripture. Teachers regularly research and share the writings of Pope Francis and his 'tweets' are used to help pupils' understanding. Local clergy provide valuable curriculum support, contributing to lessons and sharing experiences, thus enabling pupils to have a deeper understanding of their learning.
- During the period of school closure and remote learning, due to the Covid pandemic, teachers maintained their high expectations with a range of structured activities relating to religious education.

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

- Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and that the required amount of curriculum time is given to religious education. As a result of this, the quality of work produced by pupils has parity with other subjects.
- The RE lead has a clear vision of excellent teaching and learning in religious education. She has strong, well-embedded systems for tracking and monitoring the delivery of religious education. These include lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, seeking the views of pupils and staff and analysing pupil progress data. The challenge and support that she provides to staff results in teaching that is at least consistently good, and on occasions outstanding.
- The new link governor for RE has a good understanding of the monitoring and accountability required in relation to the provision and impact of RE and has undertaken monitoring visits. She reports to the governors' Monitoring Committee, which in turn reports to the full Governing Body.
- The school development plan includes a priority relating to the religious education curriculum and improving outcomes for pupils. Success criteria are identified and progress towards objectives are regularly monitored and reported.
- The RE lead keeps abreast of all diocesan developments and undertakes training associated with the teaching of RE. She offers regular support and guidance to staff, who value her input.

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

- Pupils show reverence and respect during prayer and they participate willingly. During the inspection this was seen in class worship and in a whole school Gospel assembly.
- Pupils enjoy praying and understand its importance. They are familiar with traditional Catholic prayers and the use of Scripture in prayer, but they have limited opportunities for spontaneous prayer or for using a variety of prayer styles.
- Pupils confidently participate in prayer and worship, in school and in the parish church. They enjoy the weekly hymn practice, and singing is a strength of the school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the liturgical year, which is consistently referenced across the school. This is reflected in classroom prayer tables and displays in communal areas. Pupils responded positively to a recent initiative to raise the profile of the prayer tables and, as a result, each class has used an allocated budget to develop and personalise their table.
- The experience of being part of a prayerful community has a positive impact on the development of pupils. They have a good awareness of other faiths and of the importance of prayer for all religions.

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

- Prayer is a key feature of daily life at the school and is included in all school gatherings and celebrations. Pupils are also provided with the opportunity to voluntarily attend the Thursday parish Mass during their lunch break.
- Leaders and teachers have a secure understanding of the liturgical year, seasons and feasts, and they ensure that prayer and collective worship are relevant and have a clear purpose and message.
- Teachers are effectively inducted into the prayer life of the school and they value the support provided by the acting headteacher, who is a strong and effective role model. All staff are acutely aware of the importance of prayer and are active in promoting this important area of school life.
- Staff willingly take on the responsibility for leading prayer in their classes, and do so thoughtfully and with a commitment to creating opportunities for individual reflection, as seen in Year 4. They involve pupils, who would benefit from being given greater responsibility for planning and leading prayer.
- The physical environment supports the prayer life of the school, with prayer tables in the school hall and in each classroom. Some pupils spoke of wanting to have a quiet prayer space they could access. This could be developed in the RE quiet room or in the generous outdoor space which the school has.
- Links with the parish are extremely strong. The parish priest provides high quality, valued support to the school, a parishioner plays the piano at the weekly Gospel assembly and the parish choir co-ordinator advises on the choice of hymns and leads the whole school weekly hymn practice.

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

- Leaders see prayer as an integral part of life at the school and ensure that there are regular opportunities for prayer and collective worship. They have a secure understanding of the liturgical year, seasons and feasts, and ensure that prayer and collective worship have a clear purpose and message.
- The chaplaincy lead is a strong role model and has devised a number of templates to monitor the prayer life of the school. These include pupil and staff questionnaires as well as learning walks. Pupil chaplaincy leaders undertake monitoring activities, which they report back to staff. All findings of monitoring are shared with governors, and although priorities for development are routinely identified, they are not yet included in the school development plan.
- The Governing Body is overtly committed to the prayer life of the school. Governors visit the school and attend collective worship and Masses. The link governor undertakes monitoring activities and compiles reports which are presented to the Governing Body.
- Parents are positive about their children's experience of prayer and the strong links with the parish. They receive regular information about events, such as the recent Marian procession, through the school website and newsletter, and are invited to attend as appropriate.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 105 parental questionnaires received. Some typical responses included:

“There is a great sense of belonging to the school and the community. The children seem happy and support each other.”

“This school is exceptional; it regularly goes well beyond what would be expected in making sure the children have all the opportunities to develop in all areas.”

“It's a small very friendly school that makes the children feel valued, accepted and belonging. it promotes Christian values and equality, kindness and a happy outlook on life. My kids are always happy and can't wait to go to school!”

“I like the way the school encourages children to grow emotionally and spiritually.”

“The behaviour seems to be outstanding; my child always comes home happy. The teachers and the headteacher are always visible after school. Communication is a strong point. The RE and sports provision is fantastic.”

“The head teacher and many of the teaching staff seem to care very much about the children as individuals, as well as about the quality of their education.”

“I value the ethos. Exceptional teachers who consistently go above and beyond. Their can do attitude is passed onto the children. We are lucky to have such an excellent school for our children.”

“It is a lovely, inclusive school, with outstanding, committed staff.”

“The school has a great community ethos with a cultural diversity which is healthy for a child's development.”

“A very strong teachers' team and a very good links between parents and school. Also, the children are well supported in their physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing.”

“Everyone works together to create a happy environment for all the children to enjoy being there.”

“It's got a great community feel with dedicated and caring teachers.”

“It is a wonderful school, which I chose because having been a student there myself I knew that its ethos and morals were of a high standard.”

“This school gives the best start in life for my children. It promotes respect and resilience”