



INSPECTION REPORT

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

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URN: 109250

DCSF Number: 801/3411

Headteacher: Miss Karen Evans

Chair of Governors: Reverend Father Gregory Grant

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: 30th March and 1st April 2009

Date of previous inspection: March 2006

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Maisie Foster

Description of School

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School serves an inner-city parish close to the centre of Bristol. There are 204 pupils on roll, 90% of whom are Catholics. A higher proportion of pupils than is usual in schools nationally comes from minority ethnic groups. The number of pupils learning to speak English as an additional language (EAL) is also above the national average. Three pupils have statements of Special Educational Need and the number of pupils with learning difficulties is above that of schools nationally. The number of pupils claiming free school meals is lower than the number the school believes to be entitled to do so.

In recent years the levels of attainment on entry to school are well below those of pupils of the same age nationally. The school has a consistently high attendance rate. Demand for places is very high.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

The Catholic life of the school and its Religious Education are outstanding. The introduction of an effective Leadership and Management team by the recently appointed Headteacher has resulted in rigorous and effective self-evaluation systems which have accelerated school improvement at all levels.

The Governing Body also has very effective systems to implement its roles and responsibilities and is ambitious in its goals for pupils and whole community.

Relationships at all levels are excellent and mirror the Gospel values upon which the school was founded seventy- five years ago.

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

The issues identified in the previous Section 48 inspection in 2006 focussed on:

- 1. continuing to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning to ensure that standards are consistent throughout the school*

A detailed cycle of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has been established. Each Lead Learner undertakes lesson observations, scrutinies of pupils' work and discussions with pupils about their learning. In the case of Religious Education, the Headteacher and the Diocesan Adviser have also been involved in this cycle. Outcomes of this rigorous review are reported to Governors and appropriate action taken. Information from these procedures feeds into Performance Management targets and the RE Action Plan and into the School Improvement

Plan. This has resulted in consistently high standards of teaching and learning and rapid improvement.

- 2. reviewing the Marking Policy to ensure consistency of practice that includes suggestions for improvement*

The marking policy has been reviewed and teachers are developing a dialogue with pupils to help them to become more mature thinkers and deepen their learning. This approach is ongoing and is evaluated regularly as part of the school's planned cycle for monitoring and evaluating.

- 3. further developing Collective Worship as identified in the School Improvement Plan*

There has been significant development in this area since the appointment of the present Headteacher. Collective Worship is now planned for the year. It is rightly given high importance in the school, being well-planned, imaginatively delivered and engaging all participants.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The energy and enthusiasm of a visionary Headteacher, the excellent provision and the effective systems for monitoring and evaluating contribute to the fast rate of school improvement and to pupils' progress. Both Governors and Staff know the strengths and areas for further development in school. Generous resources, training, clear lines of communication and of responsibility, combined with high quality care and commitment should ensure that there is even greater impetus to succeed.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- continue to develop the work on assessment, including pupil self and peer assessment, and the systems for tracking individual pupil's progress through use of the Broad Areas of Attainment
- continue to embed the diagnostic approach to marking in order to further pupils' reflective thinking

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

Leaders have a shared vision of the school with Christ at its centre. The Catholicity of the school is reflected in all its activities, and particularly through the effective role models of the staff and Governors. There are exceptionally close links between the parish and the school. This is evident from the presence at the parish Mass on Sundays of the Senior Leadership Team and other members of staff; their involvement in the liturgical life of the parish as Eucharistic ministers and readers, and by the music ministry and the choir. The Headteacher leads by example and is a visible presence in the church and in the school, accessible to all and respectful of all.

The Governors, as parishioners, are examples of what it is to be part of a worshipping community. Pupils and their families meet Governors at school where they support and follow up how the policies of the school work in practice, and in their voluntary roles as helpers. Governors visit school regularly so that they are informed of its priorities, policies and practice. They are each assigned to a class in which they take a special interest, attending events of different kinds, for example Class Acts of Collective Worship. This informs them of the Catholic life of the school and serves as a means of monitoring and evaluating it. The Link Governor for RE writes a report for the full Governing Body to inform them about the Catholic life of the school as reflected in Collective Worship, classroom interaction and discussions with pupils.

The Chair of Governors, the Parish Priest, has a crucial role in working with the school to develop the moral and spiritual aspects of pupils' lives and the lives of their families. Pupils are confident in leading liturgies and are well-prepared for their participation in Parish Masses. They grow in faith as they prepare readings, compose prayers and learn the rituals of liturgical practices.

All Staff share the responsibility of being witnesses to Christ in their work. They are commissioned by the Parish Priest in the presence of the whole school community, including Governors, in a Missioning Mass at the beginning of the new academic year. During the Mass the staff make a formal commitment to pupils, parents and the parish.

The parishioners themselves, and the parents, are very proud of the school which they cherish as their own. Parishioners offer models of service to others in their volunteer work expanding pupils' opportunities, as for example through teaching singing in Key Stage 1. The Pastoral Assistant is a Governor and a voluntary helper in the school, reflecting the close relationships between parish, governors and the school. The Parish Priest summarised the excellent relationship between parish and school: "The school infuses and enthuses the parish."

Grade 1

Collective Worship

Prayer is central to the school's life. Pupils are surrounded by invitations to prayer through their own prayers and the traditional prayers of the Church. Staff and children pray together, reinforcing the bonds of a praying community. All meetings of Governors and of Staff begin with a prayer. The school environment supports spirituality by inviting children to engage in

reflection and by seeking to develop their sense of wonder and awe. The school works assiduously to fulfil its aim of providing a spiritual and moral formation for each child to reach, as far as possible, his or her potential.

Liturgy is well-planned to take account of pupils' age, ability and culture. Pupils see photographs and videos of themselves engaged in the practice of their faith and they are encouraged to question each other and themselves to confirm understanding and stimulate further thinking. They learn to value each other, from the value that is placed on them by all the adults in the school. They are encouraged to be open through their honest interpretations of the Gospels, of the lives of Saints and in their prayers. Pupils trust each other and the adults who work with them and for them; growing as persons of faith. They have learned from the excellent role models round them, how to praise God and show His love in their lives. Pupils take responsibility for their own Acts of Worship, working together to show what they have learned and where they are in their spiritual journeys, developing resourcefulness and independence. They have absorbed and internalised the creative and imaginative approaches to worship that the Headteacher and their class teachers have modelled. They make choices, solve problems and negotiate decisions. Preparing for Mass or Collective worship, pupils learn to work as a team, focussed on their learning of what it is to be a Christian and the implications of that on their behaviour and view of the world.

Collective Worship properly enjoys high status in the school. The year's liturgy is planned, reviewed and evaluated. This gives structure, coherence and monitoring opportunities for Governors who attend Acts of Collective Worship, witnessing their importance and affirming the pupils. Pupils learn the structure of the Mass; they know the prayers and are confident readers. Preparing for the celebration of Mass is given time and status to emphasise the centrality of its place in the liturgy. One weekly class-based Collective Worship focuses on the Readings of the Sunday Mass to prepare pupils in advance. Pupils learn the Scriptures, discuss their meaning and are active in their involvement in prayer and praise. They offer their talents as singers and musicians to celebrate as a community. Pupils are not only confident speakers of the Gospel, but are also aware of the Gospel values they are learning and seeing in the actions of the adults around them.

Opportunities for quiet reflection invite children and adults to be closer to God and to the community with whom they worship, whether at school or at Church. A quiet room, appropriately named the Oasis, decorated with high quality banners and artefacts, provides a peaceful place for individuals, groups or classes to reflect and pray.

The very good quality of artefacts, signs and symbols used in Collective Worship and on class altars emphasises the status and importance of prayer. Interactive and striking displays stimulate talk as well as thought. They reflect the communal sense of responsibility for developing the Faith. All Staff, teaching and non-teaching appropriately share the task of creating displays.

Grade 1

Community Cohesion

Community cohesion is a strength of the school. The demographic profile of the school has changed very much in recent years. Inclusion is central to the ethos of the school: every one is valued. This is commented on by both parents and pupils alike. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and children who may need additional support are identified early to ensure that any barriers that might diminish their chances are removed.

The rigorous systems to assess all pupils' progress are applied with particular care to pupils who have EAL, or SEN or special abilities. A provision map for each group details appropriate resources and approaches so that opportunities for learning are maximised. The Senior Management Team meets regularly with all teachers and Learning Support Assistants to review these pupils' well-being and progress in Inclusion/Solution Circle meetings. Targets and strategies are identified to ensure effective support. Parents are involved in their children's learning through these reviews. Such is the high quality of the processes that the school has been awarded the Inclusion Mark.

The commitment to support vulnerable children and their families, particularly those of other cultures and languages is reflected in the school's Community Cohesion policy. The seriousness with which the school views this sensitive area is further reflected in the training it has provided for both Governors and Staff, for example on Refugees. The work done in Black History Week as a whole school focus provides opportunities for ethnic minority pupils to see their culture and the important people from their history held in high esteem. Year 6's focus on Black History has been extended to last a term and encompasses the influence of people who lived in Bristol and who made a difference to their world and time. It is an important message for the young: that individual people can make a difference to the world.

The "can do" perspective permeates the pupils' attitudes, as for example when two Year 5 pupils attended the Fair Trade exhibition with a member of staff. The information they gathered was brought back and discussed with other pupils and the Link Governor for RE. A Steering Committee was formed and plans are in place to do presentations for the staff, parents and other pupils on using fairly traded goods. Pupils are articulate in pointing out the injustices of child labour, the exploitation of workers and discrimination against the Third World. They have a strongly developed sense of justice, augmented by these direct experiences and by their weekly Collective Worship on Virtues and Values.

Pupils learn to respect other faiths through learning about them and visiting their places of worship. During Faith Week each class researches a world religion and visits a place of worship e.g. a mosque, a Hindu Temple, a synagogue or a Buddhist Temple. People of other faiths, including parents, visit school and talk to pupils and staff, demonstrating that other faiths are involved in the search for truth.

Parishioners have formed St Patrick's Music to fund a peripatetic music teacher to teach vocal tuition as an after-school club open to the community; inclusion in action. Parishioners and parents are welcomed as volunteers to help on residential trips, working together to benefit the children.

Pupils learn to respect others through the liaison that is encouraged with the community of elderly people who live on the site shared by the school and parish church. Senior citizens are invited to school celebrations, including the celebration of Mass, concerts, plays, carol singing (which took place on the playground with a snow-machine for added effect!). Pupils learn the respect that the Indian community has for the teaching profession as each teacher is honoured with a gift on International Teachers' Day.

Pupils from other Christian denominations join with their Catholic friends from school and with parishioners from a number of Christian Churches, including the parish church, as witnesses to Christ's Passion when they process together through the streets of Bristol on Good Friday. Pupils and their families are supported by the parish, for example, the Polish community is supported by a number of Polish priests who stay for three months in the parish, working there and visiting school. Polish pupils and their families are further supported by two Polish Learning

Support Assistants who translate and help directly with the difficult process of settling in to a new community.

Governors seek to reflect the ethnic diversity of the school in their own composition. When posts become vacant, such as parent governors, they are advertised at school and in the Parish Newsletter with a particular invitation to parents from minority ethnic backgrounds.

In the spirit of the Gospel *"Whatever you do for anyone in My Name you do it to Me"* pupils are encouraged to consider the needs of other people. They raise funds for a large range of charities: local, national and global, for example the Julian Trust for the homeless in Bristol; a Romanian orphanage and CAFOD. As one Year 6 pupil pointed out: *"We should help other people because in God's eyes we are one family."*

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Pupils' achievement in Religious Education (RE) is outstanding overall. All pupils, including those with special educational need and those with English as an additional language, show very good achievement. Children enter school with attainment which is well below that of children nationally. An increasing percentage of pupils have a language other than English as their home language. Given these starting points, pupils make excellent progress in RE by the end of Key Stage 2. This is in line with attainment in the core subjects of the National Curriculum where pupils' standards of attainment are above the local authority and national averages. The pupils' oral fluency strongly supports their learning.

Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of their Faith and are increasingly able to appreciate the implications of their beliefs on their everyday behaviour. Their spiritual development encompasses a strong moral dimension which is integral to their personal development. They have the skills to work independently and think for themselves as well as the growing capability to cooperate and collaborate effectively. The ethos and community life of the school exert a significant influence on pupils' developing sense of responsibility and on their attitudes of respect and tolerance.

The consistently high quality of teaching, supported by the strong ethos of the school and the outstanding curriculum and collective worship, together result in pupils' excellent achievement in RE.

Grade 1

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Teaching in the majority of lessons seen was outstanding. Teachers have very good knowledge of Religious Education so are able to build very effectively on what pupils already know and understand. Teachers use a variety of teaching approaches and learning activities to ensure that pupils who learn in different ways are able to engage fully with their learning. Children frequently take a lead in decision making, problem solving and group negotiations in their RE lessons which also contributes strongly to their personal and social development. Pupils develop as good learners who know what to do if they do not understand and who can work independently or collaboratively. Skilled Teaching Assistants are used effectively to support or extend learning.

In one outstanding lesson *Voices of the Passion* pupils reflected on the Passion of Christ through re-creating scenes using poetry, singing, music and drama of the highest quality. This learning experience represented not only a creative experience but a profoundly spiritual one. The teacher's high quality questioning ensured that spirituality was the primary focus.

Teachers plan together, making good use of each other's expertise and helping to ensure progression and continuity and that there are no gaps in provision. Lessons are interesting and well structured so that pupils are motivated and stay involved, resulting in very good progress. The pace of lessons is brisk, contributing to pupils' rapid progress. The regular use of information and communication technology (ICT) enhances pupils' learning through opportunities to research and investigate and to present their findings to other pupils, thus re-enforcing their own learning. Similarly, the use of videos and photography allows pupils to revisit what they have learned in a more reflective way. The management of behaviour is consistently good ensuring that some pupils' challenging behaviour is appropriately handled without disruption to learning.

Marking is conscientious and regular and teachers' written comments give pupils guidance about why their work is good and what they need to do to improve further. In most, but not all classes, pupils have opportunities to respond directly to teachers' comments. Assessment is based on the broad areas of attainment used nationally. This system is currently being refined to reflect more precisely the individual attainment of each child. Alongside this development, the school is working to improve pupils' ability to assess their own work and to support each other through peer assessment. Some aspects of work on assessment are at an early stage of development.

The strong focus on communication through drama, dialogue and discussion results in pupils becoming increasingly articulate, confident speakers able to express their thoughts and views. This is particularly evident in RE where pupils are well acquainted with the language of spirituality and use it with ease and familiarity.

Grade 1

Quality of the Curriculum

The RE curriculum is based on the national programme *Here I Am (HIA)*. This is amended and complemented with other planning and materials to provide a very good quality curriculum which is well matched to the needs and interests of the pupils. This provision meets the requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference. The RE curriculum has led the way in the wider development of the school's skills-based curriculum with its strong emphasis on pupils' literacy skills and creativity. This development is effectively monitored and evaluated regularly.

The Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) is taught through *'In the Beginning'*, a programme designed for primary schools and approved by the Diocese. This programme is carefully planned taking account of what is covered in HIA and in the programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE), in order to avoid gaps or unnecessary repetition. Parents and governors were consulted and no pupil is withdrawn from this provision.

The well-organised and appropriate provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has resulted in the school achieving the Bristol Foundation Standard. The systems for induction are well-thought out, allowing for confidential one to one interviews with parents to respect confidentiality, as well as more public meetings where information of a general nature is exchanged. New parents are welcomed into the community and meet key people: the Headteacher, Parish Priest, Link Governor, School Improvement Partner and the Early Years

Staff helping them to feel secure. Most pupils entering school are already known to the staff who liaise closely with pre-school settings to ensure that children's needs are met and that they settle well. Strategies are in place to support pupils who have EAL and they are encouraged to speak in their mother tongue. Parents who are from minority ethnic groups are encouraged to help in school to provide confidence to the newcomers. For example, one father taught a science lesson and other parents hear readers or read stories to a group or class.

Pupils have extensive opportunities to develop a wide range of knowledge and skills within an interesting curricular experience. Specialist teachers are adept at contributing to pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem, for example in mathematics teaching for the Gifted and Talented, instrumental music tuition, and Sports coaching. The inclusion of French and Spanish helps pupils to appreciate the similarities and differences between people of different nations. Music has a significant and pervading influence in extending and enriching the teaching and learning of RE and in the development of pupils' spirituality. About half the pupils at Key Stage 2 have instrumental music lessons including the clarinet, piano, trumpet, violin, cornet and guitar. African drums too, feature in RE lessons with pupils being adept at composing their own songs and accompaniment. St Patrick's Music, from the parish, contributes to extending pupils' musical experience by inviting them to attend concerts given by professional musicians.

Pupils' personal development is strengthened, as is their contribution to the life of the school, through musical and dramatic performances for other pupils, parents and parishioners. The school works with local businesses to promote breadth in pupils' experience and to act as role models. The Bradley Grant Trust, for example, funds cultural activities to broaden pupils' experience of the wider world through visits to places of particular interest such as museums, theatres, art galleries and Living History sites. Similarly, Year 6 visit Clifton Cathedral for retreats to further develop their spirituality. The residential weekend helps pupils to develop independence and initiative. It also reminds them of the wonders of Creation and of their responsibilities to it.

All pupils are given a learning diary which records their week and their homework, offering opportunities for them to discuss their learning with parents or carers. It also records the reading for Sunday Mass so that pupils and their families can be familiar with the readings and lessons for that week. The curriculum includes the opportunity for Year 6 to participate in a retreat with the Chair of Governors who is the parish priest. This gives them a structured time dedicated to thought and reflection on the presence of God in their lives. The comprehensive and imaginative curriculum reflects the school's value of its pupils and its determination to foster their personal development, faith and spirituality. Parents and pupils confirm that they enjoy school: "What I enjoy about this school is that it gives you opportunities to do lots of things."

Grade 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The Governors and senior leaders of the school have a clear vision of the school's direction and purpose reflected in its Mission statement *'Learning together with God'*. Governors are very well acquainted with the school and the community it serves. They are closely involved in the academic and spiritual life of the school and take their responsibilities very seriously. A network of effective committees supports and fosters different aspects of the school's work and development. This also helps to ensure effective decision making and regular exchange of information.

The Headteacher, and Lead Learner for RE, work to ensure consistently high quality curricular provision alongside reliable systems to monitor school improvement. They trust teachers and support staff to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as educators in faith. The Lead Learner effectively oversees all aspects of provision for RE including the curriculum; teaching and learning, and monitoring. There is a well established cycle of lesson observations, work scrutiny and discussions with pupils about what they are learning. This ensures that the Leader is well-informed and all information is used to maximum effect to shape future planning.

There is a strong ethos of peer support in the school: all staff care about and for each other. This is modelled by the Headteacher and supported by Governors with resources made available to implement this care in practical ways. The Headteacher, with the support of the Governors arranges Well-being days for all the staff to find relaxation and rest. Some of these are in the form of retreats to nourish their spiritual as well as physical health.

The Lead Learner and the Headteacher strongly support colleagues in the teaching of RE, motivated by a commitment to serve Christ in the school and in the wider community.

Grade 1
