



INSPECTION REPORT

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

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Headteacher: Mr K Loftus

Chair of Governors: Mrs A Ferries

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: 10 & 11 December 2007

Date of previous inspection: 2 & 3 February 2004

Reporting Inspector: Ms A Fowler

Description of School

St Patrick's is a smaller than average voluntary aided Catholic primary school serving the parishes of St Anthony of Padua in Melksham and St Patrick's in Corsham. The school has a good relationship with both parishes. The area is largely rural and pupils also attend from outlying villages. Pupil numbers in the school are increasing; this reverses the trend from a few years ago. This year the school was oversubscribed in the reception class. The school has close links with the Catholic secondary schools, St Gregory's in Bath and St Augustine's in Trowbridge. At present approximately 52% of the pupils are baptised Catholics though this figure rises to 60% in the reception/foundation stage. Attainment is broadly average on entry.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St Patrick's is an outstanding Catholic school. The leadership and management of the school contribute to the school's success and provide excellent role models. The distinctive nature of the school is apparent in the visible signs around the school, in the welcome expressed to visitors and in the behaviour of the whole community who strive to live by the values of the Gospel. Self evaluation is accurate and realistic, monitoring and evaluation of both the Catholic life of the school and academic RE take place on a regular basis. The school is committed to improving standards. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is excellent with, according to the pupils themselves, very little evidence of bullying. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for each other with older pupils looking after younger pupils and for aspects of school life through the school council. Even the youngest member of the council took their responsibilities seriously. Parents expressed great confidence in the school praising the strong ethos, the sense of family the school engenders and the care and guidance given to pupils.

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

All requirements of the last inspection have either been met fully or are part of a long term development plan. The school is to be congratulated for the improvement in the use of drama and music in worship which is now of an excellent standard

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school's own self evaluation is accurate and realistic. The leadership provide excellent role models and inspire confidence. The whole staff team are committed to raising standards and to developing the ethos of the school and a development strategy is in place which should ensure that this happens. The school enjoys the support of both parents and pupils and is well placed therefore to improve even further.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to develop the assessment strategy so that assessment data is used to inform planning.
 - Develop assessment **for** learning techniques to enable pupils to improve their own learning
 - Offer pupils the opportunity to take over the planning and delivery of some assemblies
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The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

Leaders throughout the school have a clear sense of direction and clearly understand the purpose of a Catholic school. The school's own self evaluation is realistic and accurately identifies the areas for improvement. A particular strength of the school is the management of change. Despite the fact that the school, for a variety of reasons, has experienced a high staff turnover during the last twelve months, the systems and structures in place have ensured that the impact on pupils is minimal; moreover because of the importance placed on induction new staff clearly understand the ethos of the school and their role in supporting this ethos. Leaders are excellent role models through their actions demonstrating the values on which the school is based. The school is a place of optimism, hope and enthusiasm; it promotes high standards and behaviour and leaders actively seek to consult the views of pupils, staff and parents. Visitors to the school feel welcomed and the school enjoys the support of parents who value the work of the school. There is a strong sense of family within the school community. Governors play an active role in the school and understand the responsibilities of a governing body. The mission statement, "Live love and Learn like Jesus" is understood by all and is lived out in practice. The school monitors and evaluates both the religious life of the school and academic religious education. The school has an excellent relationship with the diocese and supports diocesan inset programmes and courses.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

Prayer underpins the life of the school and draws upon a wide range of styles and resources. It celebrates the liturgical life of the church as well as offering many informal opportunities for prayer. All pupils including the reception class were able to recite formal prayers with both confidence and respect. As pupils progress through the school their understanding also develops and they are able to write their own prayers and lead liturgies. During the course of the inspection two reconciliation services were observed in preparation for advent. The key stage two service was led by the pupils. There was also an opportunity to observe a voluntary prayer activity at lunchtime based around the Jesse Tree, a large number of pupils took part in this despite the fact that it took place in their lunch time. They were very respectful and clearly valued the opportunity to take part in such activities. All classes had a prayer corner with appropriate displays for the season and prayer was a regular part of the RE lesson. Pupils and staff use drama, music and IT to enhance the prayer life of the school. To celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the school a special school prayer book was created and sent to every home. The school enjoys a good relationship with both parishes, priests attend the school on a regular basis and the school supports the first communion programme in Corsham. The school also coordinates the year five retreat at Kilve Court for schools in this diocesan area. Pupils value this activity and talked about how much they gained from it. The spiritual and moral development of pupils is excellent and the prayer life of the school clearly contributes to this. Pupils understand the value of stillness and reflection and are able to show clearly that they understand the connection between faith and life. Non Catholic staff are well supported by

colleagues and are confident in their ability to lead prayer and worship. At the moment assemblies tend to be organised by staff and it would develop pupils understanding to an even greater extent if they were able to take on more responsibility in leading services.

Grade 1

Community Cohesion

The school has a coherent set of values, based on the Gospel, which are understood and lived out by all. The school is a welcoming place and the inclusion of all learners is a central goal. The Every Child Matters agenda is well developed and understood from a Catholic perspective. Pupils are encouraged to develop their, social and cultural awareness and understanding. The school is committed to the inclusion of all pupils and children with learning difficulties make particularly good progress. Monitoring and evaluation takes place to ensure that all groups of pupils receive equal access to the curriculum. The school has piloted work in teaching a foreign language to primary children and for the last few years has appointed foreign language assistant teachers from Spain and Chile in order to promote the teaching of Spanish. The school has strong links with neighbouring schools in the Corsham cluster. The Headteacher has been invited to address conferences in Wiltshire on developing a global dimension in school. The head was also invited to address the pupils of the local high school on their presentation evening. Pupils and staff take part in many charitable activities and are encouraged to develop a sense of the common good. They are also encouraged to take part in local events supporting the local community. As an example of their work supporting the local community the pupils entered the "Design a Christmas Card Competition" for the town of Corsham. One of St Patrick's pupils won this and switched on the Corsham Christmas lights. The school also participated in the Corsham music festival and pupils support the local residential home for the elderly. Pupils are encouraged to become aware of the wider global issues, for example working on the 'Live Simply' project with CAFOD and supporting the Cheshire Homes development project in Zambia where a former member of staff is working. The RE curriculum includes the teaching of other faiths and provides opportunities for visitors from different faith or cultural traditions to speak to pupils. Recent work has included projects on Hinduism and Indian culture.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

The pupils are above average in their emotional and oral responses to the work. They are articulate and confident in expressing their understanding. The school is already aware that written standards do not yet reflect the high oral standards. The school is in the middle of a strategy to raise literacy levels and improve written work. Marking shows signs of becoming more diagnostic although this isn't always the case. For older pupils tasks are now being set with clear criteria relating to the assessment levels. These are translated into 'I can' statements to make it easier for pupils to understand what is being asked of them. This work needs to continue and should lead to an improvement in written standards. Assessment data is now being collected and needs to be used to inform planning. Assessment for learning is an area which needs to be further developed.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Teachers' subject knowledge is good, non Catholic teachers are able to seek advice from the coordinator if they are uncertain of any aspect. All lessons observed were well planned and

resourced. Teachers seek to maintain the balance between learning about and learning from. Where teaching is at its best the lesson is structured to involve the pupils almost immediately in a thinking skills exercise. Occasionally the pace of a lesson drops so that pupils are not actively engaged. Lesson objectives are shared with the class and connections to previous work are clear. The majority of pupils enjoy the lessons and welcome the opportunity to ask questions. Pupils are able to explain, at their level, the meaning of symbols, for example, the symbols of the Advent wreath and the symbols of baptism. Their literacy levels are high and their use of religious language is above average with pupils able to understand and explain concepts such as The Immaculate Conception. Teachers constantly strive to reinforce literacy within RE taking care to explain new words and concepts. All pupils including those in reception understand the use and meaning of the sign of the cross and simple prayers. As pupils grow in their understanding, so too does their use of religious language and their repertoire of formal prayers. The majority of pupils are able to make connections between faith and life. Pupils are able to work independently if required and when working in groups or with a partner demonstrate a high level of maturity and stay focussed on the task. Good use is made of teaching assistants to support those pupils with special needs and work is differentiated both by task and by the use of resources.

Grade 1

Quality of the Curriculum

The curriculum fulfils the requirements of the curriculum directory with RE receiving ten percent of curriculum time. The school uses 'Here I am' as the basis of its RE syllabus. Relationship education also fulfils the diocesan requirements with the school implementing the 'In the beginning' programme. Pupils are invited during the lessons to use a variety of skills including, empathy, investigation, research, oral work and imagination. Extended writing skills and evaluative pieces of work need to be developed further. Progression within and between the key stages is monitored through the planning of the different topic areas. There is a need to make sure that progression is sufficiently developed within key stages. The curriculum makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils are taught about other faiths and to respect other faiths. The curriculum is structured in such a way that children from non Catholic backgrounds are able to access it and make progress.

Grade 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The RE coordinator is committed to developing the vision of the school and to raising standards. The leadership of the school and the coordinator lead by example and provide training, resources and support for colleagues. Staff feel that they are supported and guided. They have a thorough grasp of all areas of current thinking and debate. Priorities for the subject are clearly identified and a development plan is in place. The school is focused on using new initiatives to raise standards. The school's self review is accurate and informed. The coordinator monitors lessons, consults the views of pupils and parents and conducts regular book trawls. Assessment levels are beginning to be used and the school is building up a portfolio of pupils work to help with consistency in levelling. As yet data is not fully informing planning and assessment for learning as well as of learning needs to be more fully developed. RE is well resourced and supported and all staff are able to access the appropriate inset.

Grade 1