



INSPECTION REPORT

School: St Pius X Catholic Primary School
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Headteacher: Mr Anthony Halloran
Chair of Governors: Mrs M Patrick

Date of inspection: 22nd and 23rd November 2007
Date of previous inspection: 16th and 17th May 2005
Reporting Inspector: Mr P Bates

Description of School

St Pius X is a smaller than average primary school on the edge of Bristol. It primarily serves the parish of St Pius X in Withywood. There are 111 pupils on roll of whom 28% are Catholics. This percentage has been declining over the past two years. The school is situated in an area of social and economic deprivation with 50% of the pupils receiving free school meals, which is well above the national average.

Approximately 33% of pupils have been placed on the Special Needs Register with 5% having English as an additional language. Most pupils start school with skills, knowledge and understanding below the levels expected for their age. The school has suffered from significant disruption during the last few years. The current Headteacher is the seventh person to hold that position since 2003, with a resulting high staff turnover. This has now stabilised. In 2007, the parish priest tragically died which affected the whole school community. With the recent appointment of a new parish priest and a new chair of governors, the school is looking forward to a period of stability.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St. Pius X is an inclusive and welcoming school. A strength of the school is the effective way it has responded to the many challenges it has had to face over the past few years. Overall the school provides a satisfactory Catholic education with some elements which are good. The recently appointed Headteacher is providing strong, clear leadership and has a very accurate view of the schools' strengths and development needs. When one takes into account the low levels of knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith of most pupils when they enter school, they make satisfactory progress. However, the standards achieved by the end of key stage 2 are still below those that should be expected. Pupils are happy and enjoy school as a result of the hard working staff and the strong Catholic ethos that permeates the school.

The provision made enables pupils to develop well; spiritually, emotionally, socially and morally. Parents are happy with the education provided although they are reluctant to join in with school events. The school does not have a full complement of governors at present, but those in post work effectively.

Grade 3

Improvement since the last inspection

The last inspection was 2 ½ years ago and the school is addressing the issues raised at that time. The Mission Statement has been reviewed and re-written with input from staff, governors, pupils and parents. A new Religious Education Policy is in place and a very good Co-ordinator appointed. The school has introduced a new method of assessment which, although it is in its infancy, promises to help raise standards in the future. The issue of differentiation has not been fully addressed and needs to remain a priority for the school.

Grade 3

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school has a good capacity to improve. The school has provided an accurate self-evaluation and there is a detailed Religious Education action plan, which forms part of the School Improvement Plan. The areas for development have been fully recognised. The school now benefits from the strong leadership of the Headteacher, a committed Co-ordinator and staff and an experienced chair of governors. The new parish priest visits regularly and is working closely with the school to develop further its liturgical life. The school is well placed to address all the points for action.

Grade 2

What the school should do to improve further

- 1 Carry out regular monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure appropriate standards are being achieved throughout the school.
- 2 Ensure there is meaningful differentiation in all lessons to provide a greater challenge for more able pupils.
- 3 Improve the level of resources available for religious education.
- 4 Ensure that all pupils have a firm knowledge and understanding of formal prayers.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The effectiveness of the schools' leadership and management is currently satisfactory, but is developing and well on the way to being good. The Headteacher works closely with the RE Co-ordinator and the parish priest. He has a clear vision of the mission of the school and how this relates to the broader mission of the parish in trying to develop and nurture the pupils' faith. The leadership team has shown resilience and initiative in dealing with the challenges the school has faced and has maintained a shared sense of

mission. The quality of the pastoral care provided is good and seen as essential to the establishment of a good learning environment. Close co-operation between the school, governors and parish is enabling developmental needs to be identified and tackled energetically. This is evidenced by the attention given to the spiritual, social, moral and emotional needs of the pupils and their families together with the strong sense of community seen in the school. The pupils' behaviour and respect for others in the school was of a high standard.

Grade 3

Collective Worship

Provision for worship more than meets the statutory requirements and makes a good contribution to the schools' Catholic life. The pupils pray regularly at the beginning and end of the day, before and after meals and during RE lessons. They are fully aware of the 'School Prayer' and the specific school prayers said throughout the day. However they need to have a better knowledge and understanding of more formal prayers which they should use regularly. The pupils are given opportunities for quiet reflection at various times during the day and respond appropriately. There is a well planned programme of class and whole school assemblies which generally follow the themes in the 'Here I Am' scheme and the Churches' year. There is also a Rewards assembly to reward good work and behaviour which is thoroughly enjoyed by the pupils.

Grade 3

Community Cohesion

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school by the Headteacher, staff and Governors ensures that the school's Vision Statement "working together as a loving Christian community centred on the Gospel teaching of Christ" is lived by all members of the school community. The conduct of the school ensures that everyone irrespective of gender, ethnicity, faith and ability are respected and fully involved in all areas of school life. Appropriate strategies are in place to ensure that any inappropriate or divisive behaviour is immediately dealt with. The Religious Education programme ensures that pupils have a growing awareness that they are all equal in the eyes of God and that there is, within the school, concern and respect for one another. The school follows the diocesan scheme of work and looks at other faiths at the appropriate times. The pupils in Key Stage 2 were very enthusiastic about their recent topic on Judaism.

Lunchtime and after school clubs enable pupils of all ages to play and work together. Parents are invited to school for Masses and assemblies, but at present few avail themselves of the opportunity. The school has set aside a room for parents called the 'community room', here they can meet with community workers, police, the school nurse and other agencies. Links with the parish are good and some parishioners come into school regularly to help, particularly with music. The parish priest is also a regular visitor. Pupil's support for local diocesan and world wide charities promotes an awareness of their belonging to a global community and the need to support those who are less fortunate than themselves.

Grade 2

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Pupil's attainment on entry to the school is generally below that expected. Their religious knowledge, understanding and experience of prayer reflect family practice. The pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school but by the end of Key Stage 2 standards are still below the expected level. The lack of effective differentiation leads to the more able pupils not being challenged in terms of the standard organisation and presentation of their work. The pupils at both Key Stages show knowledge of stories from the Bible, particularly about the life of Jesus. The pupils are very devout when praying and are able to recite the 'School Prayer' well. However, their knowledge of more formal prayers is variable. The teachers are beginning to assess learning at the start and finish of a topic using 'mind maps' and the appropriate assessment sheets. They are also starting to moderate the levels of pupil's work in line with the recommended levels of attainment in Religious Education. These are being collated by the Co-ordinator and will hopefully lead to an improvement in standards.

Grade 3

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Teaching in the Religious Education lessons observed varied in quality ranging from satisfactory to very good, with good or very good elements in all lessons. Where lessons were very good, there was a lively pace, all pupils were fully engaged and pupils completed their assignments. Where there was a lack of pace and creativity, some pupils drifted off task and became noisy and disruptive. Teachers planning includes a variety of teaching strategies. Learning objectives are identified and shared with the pupils. There was good use of drama and role play in both Key Stages to enhance learning. Pupils are enthusiastic about the topics they have covered. A pupil in the reception class was very proud to show the work the class had done on Baptism with Father Michael.

Interactive whiteboards are widely used and provide motivating stimuli for learning. Questioning was well used by all staff to develop pupils thinking. The quality of marking is very good throughout the school; teachers' comments are mostly constructive and often challenging. Teaching assistants work very effectively and help pupils make appropriate progress in lessons.

Grade 3

Quality of the Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory and improving. It fulfils the requirements of the Bishops' Conference with 10% of curriculum time devoted to Religious Education following the 'Here I Am' scheme. All teachers teach Religious Education. One member of staff has recently attended the diocesan modular teaching course and another two members of staff will attend this year.

Two Inset days have been provided this year to support the teaching of Religious Education. It is clear that Religious Education is accorded special importance with attractive displays around the school and prominent areas in all the classrooms. The Headteacher, Co-ordinator and parish priest have recognised the need to improve the meagre resources once an audit has been carried out. The curriculum provides the pupils with opportunities to reflect on everyday situations and during the period of the inspection the pupils were involved in an anti-bullying week. They were able to see the importance of eradicating bullying from their school. The school have planned to introduce the diocesan personal relationship programme 'In the Beginning' later this year after consultations with governors and parents.

Grade 3

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The whole staff share the vision of this Catholic school and the Headteacher and the Religious Education Co-ordinator lead by example. They have completed a thorough self evaluation and identified the areas for development. Assessment and levelling procedures have recently been put into place but are not fully embedded so it is too soon to measure their input. There is no formal induction process for Newly Qualified Teachers and staff new to Catholic education so the Co-ordinator makes herself available to assist when required. This is an area that should be looked at. Although the parish priest visits regularly he is not a governor and at present there is no link governor for Religious Education. The Co-ordinator attends the Inset opportunities provided by the diocese and passes information onto the staff.

Grade 3