



INSPECTION REPORT

St. Patrick's Catholic Primary School

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DfES Number: 801/3411

School URN: 109250

Headteacher: Mrs Michele Marshall

Chair of Governors: Fr. 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: 24-25th June 2013
Date of previous inspection: March 2009

Reporting Inspector: Joseph Skivington

Description of School

St. Patrick's is a smaller than average size primary school with 209 pupils on roll, 87% of whom are Catholic. The children are drawn from an inner city mixed area with a significant proportion from ethnic minorities. Prior religious knowledge and experiences on entry are below average. There are very strong and fruitful links with the parish and the church is adjacent to the school. The percentage of staff who are Catholic is high (92%).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St. Patrick's provides an outstanding Catholic education for all its pupils. It is a welcoming, fully inclusive, distinctively Catholic vibrant community, and its ethos is characterised by openness to all, with strong and close links over many years to the parents, the parish, and the wider community. Pupils participate enthusiastically in, and respond impressively to the excellent faith enriching provision for prayer life and liturgy. The adjoining parish church provides fruitful opportunities to be involved in parish life, and this demonstrates a sense of the mission of the school being part of the wider mission of the Church. Outcomes from the religious education programme are outstanding, resulting in consistently good and outstanding teaching. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as the others, because of effective interventions, proactive support in lessons, and tasks clearly suited to their learning needs. The religious education programme makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

Grade 1

The school's capacity to sustain the very high quality of care and education it provides is excellent. It has a long tradition of sustaining and developing the spiritual life not only of the pupils but the whole Catholic school community. This is largely due to outstanding leadership which has sustained and developed the previous outstanding performance noted at the last inspection. Self evaluation at all levels is grounded in accurate analysis and rigorous, detailed review. The senior leadership team inspires the whole school community towards an ambitious vision, planning effectively to ensure that the processes for managing the performance of staff and their professional development are used well, for example, making particularly fruitful use of diocesan resources and training exercises. Following the last inspection, the school was asked to develop further the work on assessment, including pupil self and peer assessment, and systems for tracking individual pupil progress. This has been tackled comprehensively and effectively. The second area was to embed the diagnostic approach to marking in order to further pupils' reflective thinking. This likewise has been addressed successfully so that marking is becoming increasingly a very effective tool in showing pupils how to improve. Both aspects are now a growing strength of the school and have impacted significantly on the individual progress and achievement of pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- To encourage even greater pupil ownership of their collective worship, by further developing all pupils' skills in planning and presenting their own liturgies

How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?

Grade 1

Pupils are wholeheartedly involved in the Catholic life of the school and make a positive contribution to it, not least by their excellent behaviour, which contributes to their own learning and the ethos of the school. Their grasp and understanding of the school's mission statement, which is prominently displayed around the school and revisited by each class, is very impressive because they can both talk about it with understanding, and relate it to their daily lives in and outside of school. They feel their voice is heard through opportunities for feedback, for instance in regular questionnaires, where they discuss the teaching they receive and what strategies help them to learn better. They take responsibility for their own lives and the care of the younger children. They absorb easily the shared values lived out in the Catholic ethos of the school and have a sound awareness of spiritual and moral matters which they are able to articulate well. They demonstrate a remarkable conviction in their Faith and speak easily of their spirituality through their own prayers. They respond generously to the needs of others beyond the school, and this makes a valuable contribution to the welcoming openness and inclusivity of the school. Many are involved in fundraising for a variety of charities both home and overseas, such as Cafod, as well as outreach to the local community and local charities.

Their response to, and participation in, the prayer life of the school is outstanding. They use well the opportunity to learn the skills of planning and preparing assemblies and Masses, becoming more involved as they go through the school, and now many, though not all, moving beyond just being participants or onlookers. The pupils in Years 3 and 4 were involved in the successful and thought provoking Easter productions. A remarkable number of pupils play an active part in liturgies and assemblies, and especially in the parish Sunday Masses as readers and servers. They sing joyously, and compose very beautiful and heartfelt prayers, which are kept on the class altars and used daily. Their demeanour and reverence at prayer, even the youngest children, demonstrate seriousness and growing faith, as well as a sense of the sacred and the special time for prayer. They colour the worship with music, art and drama, and as a result of their commitment they infuse and help to develop the whole Faith community.

Achievement and progress in religious education is outstanding throughout the school, given the pupils' lower starting points. Close tracking of progress builds a very accurate picture of each child's achievement over time, enabling teachers to differentiate by task and pitch lesson objectives more securely to the learning needs of every individual pupil. By the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 all pupils are meeting expectations, and many exceeding them. Learning outcomes for all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs are also excellent. The group of Syro Malabar children excel particularly well and benefit from extra RE instruction on Sundays. Pupils can discuss the topics they cover easily and translate the truths they learn into their own lives. They have a sound grasp of the main tenets of the Faith, for instance, the significance of the Last Supper, or the divinity of Jesus, as well as understanding the message of Jesus through His miracles and parables. There is planned emphasis and focus on learning from religion, and this is growing and becoming more frequent in the reflective writing of the pupils and their ability to make connections and see the relevance of what they are learning in their own lives. In lessons pupils work hard and enjoy the subject, especially when they are challenged and engaged by effective teaching strategies

and precisely targeted lesson and learning objectives. In the best lessons pupils can take ownership of their own learning with well planned, challenging but minimal intervention by the teacher.

How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic Life of the school?

Grade 1

Outstanding leadership and management promote the Catholic life of the school very effectively, with appraisal, and focussed planning for future improvement. A real strength of leadership has been to embed securely the processes of self evaluation, especially of Catholic life, which are detailed, accurate and reliable. Every activity, such as a liturgical event, an Inset day, a visit or visitor, the record of collective worship, in fact every aspect involving the Catholic ethos of the school is carefully reviewed and ways found to make it even better the next time. As a result the school can make self evaluative judgements that are not only accurate but also reliable, because the feedback from pupils and parents is frequently sought through pupil conferencing and Parent Forum, and acted upon. The school is constantly looking for ways to maximise impact, using the diocesan resources offered, such as training, and keeps up to date through diocesan Inset days. Staff as well as pupils pray together, enhancing the Catholic life of the school. Inset days for staff are both inspiring and fruitful. Prayer life and liturgies are monitored and reviewed very effectively, with close liaison between governors and senior leadership. The school development plan objectives are linked closely to performance management. The effectiveness of leadership and management is seen in the high morale of the staff, the pupil's excellent care for one another, and the very good relationships between staff and pupils. The leadership of RE is outstanding, marked by excellent record keeping and the tracking of pupils' progress, which then informs the lesson objectives. CPD is encouraged with best practice sought out and adopted through staff and moderation meetings and exercises. The RE report to the governors is detailed and invites their comment and involvement.

The governing body is made up of supportive and proactive members who are committed to sustaining the school's ethos and standards, and are keen to visit the school, particularly the RE link governor and the parish priest. They have input into the self-evaluation document, and played a role in reviewing the curriculum. The link governor with head teacher conducts a regular ethos walk around the school to look for ways to improve and enhance the school's distinctive catholic identity. The governing body is closely aware of the work that the school is doing so that it can provide real challenge and critical support, demonstrated by their alacrity in taking advantage of diocesan training and advice. All statutory and canonical responsibilities are met.

There is a clear policy promoted by governors and senior staff to promote community cohesion with the result that the school has openness to all, all are included in its life and its generous outreach to the local and the global community is much appreciated. The school collaborates well with other schools and participates in community undertakings, including local charities. The curriculum provides an exploration of other faiths, and good use is made of resources. Those of other denominations or faiths feel that they are able to express their own beliefs comfortably, and all feel included and welcomed into every aspect of school life. Acts of worship leave room for the other person's spiritual identity, their modes of expression and their values. Parents and children from all backgrounds, especially those from other cultures, for example the Syro Malabar community are not just welcomed and supported, but inject a real sense of the universal church, and provide rich experiences within the school's diverse community.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 1

Provision for prayer life is outstanding, a real strength of the school, because it meets very effectively the spiritual needs of the pupils, be it through assemblies and liturgies, or the opportunities for reflection and meditation. The pupils become familiar with the parish church through frequent visits and celebration of the Mass, and play a vigorous part in parish life. The Key stage 1 pupils have Paraliturgies which are specifically designed to help them understand the Mass. The school supports the parish- run preparation programme for First Holy Communion, especially through the sacramental units of the curriculum. There are many occasions during the day for spiritual nourishment through prayer and moments of reflection. The liturgical year is well marked, planned, and celebrated, particularly Advent, Lent and Holy Week. Then each event is evaluated and reviewed to determine how it could be bettered and made more relevant and engaging.

The curriculum successfully meets the needs of all groups of pupils, as well as meeting the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education requirements, such as the allocation of time. The school has embedded the God Matters syllabus well, rising to the challenge of a new syllabus, and continuously appraising its shape and impact. The school believes the programme meets their needs, and that it has enhanced both pupils' and teachers' faith. Relationship education is dealt with sensitively and clearly from a Catholic standpoint through the In the Beginning programme. The beliefs of other faiths are explored through topics in the schemes of work. Resources are well managed, and ICT, art and music particularly are used imaginatively to colour and enrich the learning experience. The colourful artwork and displays around the school reinforce the RE topics or liturgical seasons the pupils are studying, they affirm the creators and educate others, and visibly declare the Catholic ethos of the school. Resources to support teaching, and to enliven and enrich the schemes of work, are good. The curriculum makes an excellent and invaluable contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils, and is an area that the school is working on imaginatively to improve even further, with particular monitoring of the content and impact of the schemes of work.

The quality of teaching and purposeful learning is outstanding, with some good and outstanding practice observed. Outstanding teaching enables the pupils to learn really well because it engages their interest and provides challenge, so that the pupils themselves do the work and make the intellectual effort. Group and paired work were especially effective strategies because they provided peer learning and assessment. Proactive teaching assistants provide invaluable support especially in allowing the teacher to split children into smaller groups with differentiated tasks tailored to their learning needs. The scrutiny of written work indicates marking that is both helpful and becoming more consistent, with a dialogue set up between teacher and pupil. This would be enhanced with time set apart for pupils to reflect on and respond in writing to their teachers' challenging comments, as well as reflecting on their progress to date using the very helpful level indicator sheets in the front of their books. Pupils' work and behaviour in lessons is very good and they are enthusiastic about the subject. Their enjoyment is clearly evident and they themselves say they love RE.

Assessment procedures are well embedded, aligning the level indicators closely to the God Matters programme. The key strength is that through tracking and monitoring of progress, the teachers are becoming skilled in the implementation of this data to inform teaching and learning objectives. The school has demonstrated that this data is interpreted and translated into the lesson plans and lesson objectives in order to meet the specific learning needs of every pupil. The already effective and fruitful structure of lesson observations will continue to enable the best practice in assessment for learning, as well as successful teaching strategies, to be shared rapidly throughout the school.
