



Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

INSPECTION REPORT

St Peter's Catholic Primary School

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Headteacher: Mr Richard McKenzie
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Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 15th October 2012
Date of previous inspection: 12th July 2007

Reporting Inspector: Mr Stephen Beck
Associate Inspector: Mrs Catherine Walker

Description of School

St Peter's Catholic Primary School is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Epsom and Ewell Deanery of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. It is maintained by Surrey Local Authority. The principal parishes which the school serves are St Michael's Ashted, Our Lady and St Peter's Leatherhead, the Church of the Holy Spirit Fetcham and Our Lady of Sorrows Effingham. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 75.6% which has decreased slightly since the last inspection. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10% in all key stages.

The school admits pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 215. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is generally above average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. A lower than average number of pupils at 5% are on the school's special needs register. Approximately 20% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds with only a very small number coming from homes where English is an additional language. Most pupils are of White British heritage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

The last inspection commended St Peter's on its strong Catholic ethos, very supportive relationships between adults and pupils, the fostering of a real appreciation of individual worth and the vibrancy of its community. These attributes continue to mark St Peter's as a very good, successful school. St Peter's is a school that serves its community well, both academically and pastorally. Its Catholic ethos is explicit as is the drive to improve which is reflected in a unity of purpose expressed by all sections of the school community. This is a significant strength of the school. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners is explicitly reflected in the care, guidance and support provided which, along with behaviour and safety are outstanding features of the school. It is notable that Ofsted reported that *"Pupils are extremely keen to learn, and behave exceptionally well. They feel completely safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe"* and that this was likewise ratified in this inspection.

The Catholic ethos of the school is marked on entry to the school by a foyer focal point, with displays and focal points around the school being of a good standard.

Central to school life and religious education is the successful fostering of strong and effective links with the parishes, clergy, Deanery, other schools and the Diocese ensuring that faith remains at the heart of everything the school does. Work has already commenced on developing a school programme to bring even greater involvement into the coming 'Year of Faith'. As one parent wrote, *"My child loves going to school. She feels safe there and loves to be involved in all religious activities that take place. She is aware of the importance of prayer and has been taught and understands the importance of God in everyday life, talking about God and Jesus all the time.."*

One of the great strengths of the school is that it is clearly about people, who are the 'heart' of the school. They are a focussed group working towards common goals. The school benefits from a proactive governing body led by an outstanding chair. She produces a 'Review and Evaluation of the Governing Body' document covering the past year combined with a set of 'Key Documents' for the coming year.

All governors use this as a reference and as a working document. This secures the dissemination of a wide range of information that ensures governors are well briefed about their school. This is linked to a programme of governor involvement at a strategic level across the whole school and is an exemplar that could usefully be shared.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in July 2007. The issues identified in the areas of levels of attainment, assessment, and monitoring have moved forward but are not yet consistently applied across the school. Religious education level of attainment descriptors have been introduced and are starting to have an impact on the planning of learning activities. Teachers have developed their assessment skills enabling them to level pupils' work with greater clarity and confidence. Whole school staff moderation meetings are arranged to ensure that both a shared understanding of levelling and marking support pupil progress. Since the last inspection the school has had a very close focus on individual pupil progress in core subjects, and this has more recently been extended to religious education. Data is recorded in a tracking tool (excel) and teachers track individual pupil progress, comparing this with attainment in literacy to identify underachievement. The school is planning to implement individual pupil targets to ensure that every child understands the necessary next steps to enable them to make progress. Attainment in religious education is generally in line with that in literacy and other subjects.

Grade 2

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school's self evaluation is comprehensive. Teamwork and commitment by all involved provides a strong base for improvement and the means by which progress will be achieved. Governors are dedicated, enthusiastic, and regular visitors to the school and have fully appraised themselves of attainment in religious education. They understand their role as critical friends and provide strong, appropriate challenge. Effective and strong leadership, informed by Diocesan and National guidance, and self assessment at governor, senior leadership and subject level, ensures religious education is the core element underpinning all the school's work. Staff would benefit from the modelling of identified good practice. The religious education coordinator is committed to continuing improvement and development of the subject. It is important that the policies formulated for religious education identify the school's understanding of the next steps to move the subject forward. The school needs to ensure that policy implementation is undertaken consistently across the school. This needs to be in conjunction with a programme of monitoring lessons to ensure greater pace, challenge and consistency of assessment is achieved. As a result of effective management and a good secure staff the school has a clear capacity to improve and develop. With plans in place to reorganise the religious education curriculum responsibility within the school it will be necessary to provide appropriate induction and support for the planned new religious education coordinator as part of the school's succession planning to secure smooth transition in subject leadership

Grade 2

What the school should do to improve further

- review options and secure implementation of the updating of the school's current religious education scheme of work taking account of Diocesan guidance
- continue to develop the tracking system for religious education assessment to ensure pupils build on their progress at all levels
- raise the standard of teaching through the sharing of identified good practice

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The headteacher is a strong and effective leader with a clear vision of Catholic education. The leadership and management of St Peter's, benefits greatly, from very experienced leadership and management. Its collegiate approach is marked by ambition, a determination to succeed, and recognition of the intrinsic value of the individual which undoubtedly contributes to its success. The leadership is strongly focussed on further developing and maintaining the strong Catholic life of the school. This has been demonstrated in recent times through the good management of provision, securing continuity for pupils during a period where a number of staff have been on maternity leave.

The school's Mission Statement is a living document that receives high profile around the school, is at the centre of all documentation and is lived out by staff and pupils both during the school day and beyond. The school has a quality school improvement plan that includes a clearly laid out action plan for the ongoing development of religious education. Governors are highly knowledgeable and fulfil their clearly defined responsibilities to great effect, ensuring that priorities identified in the school development plan are monitored. Annual governors' days in the summer term and regular visits by link governors with specific responsibilities reinforce the close and fruitful links between staff and governing body. Ofsted recognised that, *"The governing body is fully involved in the life of the school and works in effective partnership with leaders and managers."*

A thread of partnership runs throughout the school and is reflected in very positive links that exist between home, school and parishes and relationships are promoted effectively through meetings, questionnaires, newsletters and parish and school events.

The headteacher benefits from support given by a dedicated Chair of Governors who is generous with her time. The close links she has forged serves the school, headteacher and governing body well, ensuring they have a good working knowledge of their school.

Grade 2

The Prayer Life of the School

The school more than fulfils its statutory obligations with regard to collective worship which is central to the life of the school and a great strength. The school is a prayerful community, fostering and nurturing the faith of each individual in the context of the individuality of each person's faith journey. The school works hard to develop pupils' knowledge of the Gospel. It also develops an appropriate understanding of the significance of the Eucharist, and of the reverence with which it should be received, through Masses which take place both in church and school throughout the year. Liturgy at St Peter's is marked by thoughtful planning designed to relate to pupils' daily lives. The Monday liturgy allows all pupils to encounter the Sunday Gospel message and encourages a personal response in the reflections and prayers that it inspires. All class teachers take a turn in leading the weekly Gospel liturgy, bearing witness to their faith and their support for the school's mission, and pupils have an increasingly active organisational and participatory role in this.

Excellent work on developing a love and understanding of the Gospel has been undertaken. This has seen the joint funding, in partnership with the parishes, of a subscription to the '*Wednesday Word*' weekly bulletin, with the aim of spreading the Sunday Gospel to all families. Every class participates in a daily act of worship, either whole-school or in class, and all classrooms have focal points to promote prayer and reflection. Children respond well, offering thoughtful reflections or meditating quietly with the aid of music or candles. Explicit links are made between the Gospel message and personal accountability and pupils are encouraged to reflect on the wider consequences of their choices or actions and recognise right from wrong. Displays and other stimuli around the school meet the aim to help pupils appreciate and respond to the wonder and beauty of creation as exemplified by display work on the theme of the 'Little Flower'.

Good use is made of a dedicated prayer room where children can pray spontaneously and which sees the older children take responsibility for its management. The school has changed the format of its class liturgies which previously were whole-school events. These are now held in a smaller space with the parents of the class, which has resulted in a more prayerful atmosphere and facilitated a more personal response from worshippers. This development is widely appreciated, but the school might consider a mixed approach that allows the school to benefit from the work of classes on their liturgies.

The school is currently developing a series of Mission Assemblies for the rest of the school which will focus on the practical implications of the school's Mission Statement values, as well as further developing themes related to SEAL and PSHE. Major feasts, times and seasons are celebrated in the church and school with Masses and other services, which develop pupils' understanding of the constant presence of God in their lives and of the structure of the liturgical year. The parish priests show great willingness to be present at such events as often as possible. In May and October the school celebrates Mary and the gift of the Rosary with rosary groups which meet every Friday in the prayer room. Lenten prayer groups that were started in 2010 are very active and continue to be very well supported. Key stage 2 pupils have an opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent and Advent. A walking meditation in the school grounds featuring significant episodes in Jesus' life and ministry is highly commendable for enabling pupils to pray in an active and joyful manner in an outdoor setting.

In liturgies attended pupils demonstrated great reverence. They were good listeners and attentive throughout. A pupil responded to a reflection on being 'A child of the light' by saying, "I am going to be a child of the light by following in Jesus' footsteps." In one they were invited

to 'still their minds, still their hearts and still their bodies in preparation to share this special time with God' and they responded well to this invitation.

A very emotive PowerPoint presentation enabled pupils to differentiate between 'need' and 'want'. One celebration was greatly enhanced by singing and reflective music. Pupils contributed with their own prayers with one child stating that the best thing about their school was that, "As a small school we are all very close." This sentiment was shared equally by parents, who are impressed by how quickly pupils get to know each other throughout the school.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school promote community cohesion?

St Peter's rightly judges itself to be an inclusive school. This is a central tenet of the school's vision that sees it engender in pupils awareness that we are all equal in the sight of God, and that peace and justice must begin with each one of us in our personal relationships. Diversity is valued with there being strong mutual respect between all members of the school community, the local community and its parishes, with very cooperative links having been built up over a number of years.

Through religious education and a number of cross curricular links, positive attitudes are nurtured towards other faiths and an insight developed into their beliefs and attitudes. These significantly broaden pupils' understanding of community. All staff and pupils are included in the liturgical life of the school where pupils learn to appreciate, understand and pray for other people, cultures, nations and religions, especially where they are struggling or in difficulty, (Cafod Fast Day, Mission Together Assemblies, Lenten, Good Shepherd and Year of Faith Masses) reflecting the broad range of charity work undertaken by the school.

In addition to the religious education programme and the school's focus on other faiths, the school undertakes work as a Fairtrade school. The school is currently developing links with a school in Nyaishozi, Kenya through Action in Africa, giving pupils an understanding of community in the widest sense. Pupils have helped to pilot a disability awareness programme for schools with a local disabled theatre group, as well as performing with them in multi-media arts performances at the Leatherhead Theatre. The school has recently been involved in a 'Red, White and Blue' day in support of helping local heroes.

The school is acutely aware that it is in a community that does not have large ethnic groups and to its credit it maximises those representatives it does have from different cultural backgrounds within the school. Parents are welcomed into school to share information about their national traditions, including traditional foods. The school benefits from an active and supportive Parents' Association which has supported development of the school grounds, among a number of projects they have undertaken.

St Peter's is currently investigating a link with an inner London school, in order to extend pupils' horizons beyond their own locality and help them to develop a fuller appreciation of the diversity of 21st century, multicultural Britain. A recent initiative has been the celebration of Black History Month, which is planned to be an annual event. The school made good use of opportunities from the Olympics and Paralympics to provide powerful examples of human diversity and the impulses that unite all people in competing, winning and losing, and this was a strong focus throughout the summer term and has clearly inspired the pupils.

Elected members of the School Council represent each class and Council members make suggestions for school development and report back to pupils and staff. Pupils represented the school at and have chaired, the Mole Valley Junior Youth Voice forum, held in the council chambers in Dorking. The oldest pupils organise play equipment for the younger pupils and play an active role in supporting them at playtime. The school has an extensive extracurricular activity programme and a large Key Stage 2 choir that performs at a number of events in the locality. Many pupils attend groups outside school and also support the elderly in the community visiting them and inviting them to events at the school. The school premises are used by a wide variety of external local community groups.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Attainment is generally above average on entry to the school. Pupils make good progress in Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1 with clear evidence seen in both written and oral work of a developing religious vocabulary. Further good progress is made at Key Stage 2. Standards achieved are at least in line with expectations in relation to age and ability. There has been an increase over time, reflecting the improved use that has been made of assessment data. As they progress through the school the pupils' work reflects their ability to apply their learning to their own lives and to social concerns. They often ask thought-provoking questions using good religious vocabulary. They show an increasing insight into the beliefs and attitudes of others. Pupils are able to express their understanding of religious topics with confidence. The emphasis the school places on incorporating key words into lessons means pupils are gaining religious literacy at a good rate and the extent to which they can think morally, spiritually and ethically is impressive. The standard of oral work is very good. Pupils are able to articulate their enjoyment of this curriculum area and demonstrate confidence, enthusiasm and interest in religious education lessons. They are able to apply the teachings of the Catholic Church to their own personal experiences and relate this to their daily lives. The recording of work currently lags behind pupils' oral skills. Behaviour in lessons and outside the classroom is impeccable. Pupils settle to lessons speedily, maximising the amount of learning time. Pupils are exceptionally well behaved within an environment of shared support and cooperation. They are polite, friendly and caring both to each other and visitors. They listen respectfully and are confident sharing ideas, experiences and feelings. There are examples of good marking where marking is interactive, encouraging reflection and understanding of 'next steps'. This needs to be shared in order to achieve a consistent approach and to raise standards further.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Teaching ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. Teaching is well supported by teachers' good understanding of the 'Here I Am' scheme being used. Where teaching is outstanding it is marked by a brisk pace, clear revisiting of learning objectives, clarity of success criteria, which are understood by pupils and tasks matched to learners needs. Teachers have a good rapport with pupils providing a secure classroom environment through sensitive interaction and skilful

use of discussion with pupils. Supporting adults provide good role models for the pupils they support.

Teachers make considerable effort to ensure that religious education lessons are distinctive and include time for individual reflection or prayer. They create enthusiasm among pupils for religious education through the use of supporting materials such as music, candles and ICT. In an Early Years class the role play area had been very effectively turned into 'St Peter's Church'. All classes have a focal prayer area that the children can readily access containing their own prayers, a gospel reading and the opportunity to pose written questions and receive responses which are displayed or contained in a book.

In lessons seen behaviour was exemplary and pupils displayed a positive attitude towards their learning. In the best teaching skilful open ended questioning is employed. The use of talk partners further enhanced pupil engagement. Effective use of assessment for learning (AfL) techniques, including sharing and returning to learning objectives and clear success criteria kept the pupils on task and supported the extension of their learning. In order to raise the overall quality of teaching the school needs to include greater levels of challenge through clear, assessment led differentiation. Teaching could benefit from more pupil initiated learning and planning with greater personalisation to ensure it meets the needs of all pupils.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The importance St Peter's gives to religious education is highly commendable. The school is currently reviewing its religious education scheme of work to ensure it is appropriate, up to date and meets the needs of pupils. Religious education is at the core of the whole school curriculum with the 'Here I Am' programme being followed by all classes at an appropriately age related level. The religious education curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Religious education lessons make a positive impact on the raising of pupils' self esteem through opportunities for discussion and reflection. It includes the teaching of other faiths which form an integral part of the programme and more than meets Bishops' Conference requirements for 10% of curriculum time to be allocated to the subject. Religious education is embedded in the timetable as a core subject. Parents are given information each term about the religious education programme and this serves to involve parents by suggesting ideas on how they can help at home. Pupil voice is well served by an effective school council. With the 'Wednesday Word' also being provided to families, the school serves home school links for this curriculum area very well. The school website is informative and has a section on 'Catholic Life' which could usefully be used to celebrate aspects of the religious education curriculum and the liturgical life of the school. The curriculum is enhanced by the school's PHSE programme and its use of SEAL materials. Education for Personal Relationships is well established and successful. Parents are well informed about the programme and are highly complementary about the sensitivity in which the content of the programme is delivered and the maturity this engendered in their children. They added that in addition to having awareness of and being happy with the programmes content, they felt it was delivered in a 'seamless' manner and their children were taught to be responsible with the knowledge gained. The teaching of other Faiths is well integrated into the curriculum as noted by a parent who wrote, *"I very much appreciate how the school supports and offers a balanced view of other religions while maintaining a Catholic ethos"*.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The coordinator keeps her subject knowledge up to date through attendance at courses and conferences and secures continued professional development for staff. A monitoring and review cycle including class observations and work sampling has been established and would now benefit from using the outcomes of this cycle more vigorously. There is an action plan for religious education within the school improvement plan. A section of the School Development Plan is always devoted to the Catholicity of the School, setting out development priorities with appropriate targets and success criteria.

Staff, governors, pupils and parents are involved in the ongoing evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including the Catholic Ethos, and contribute suggestions for improvement.

The religious education coordinator has established systems for monitoring the quality and provision of religious education throughout the school. Planning is scrutinised and teachers are given constructive feedback. Lesson observations take place and pupils' workbooks are reviewed.

The school is well served by the priests of its parishes. The priests are regular visitors to the school and all make a different but highly valued contribution to the life of the school. They support the religious education curriculum with direct classroom support, in addition to providing a chaplaincy role to the whole school community.

The religious education coordinator leads her subject with considerable professionalism, knowledge and expertise. She has a real commitment to see her subject grow and flourish as a core subject in the school. With an imminent change of coordinator responsibilities among staff she is well placed to support her successor in this role.

Grade 2