



INSPECTION REPORT

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

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DfE Number: 3437

URN: 126431

Headteacher: Miss R E McLoughlin

Chair of Governors: Mrs M Ellis

**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: 11th/12th July 2018
Date of previous inspection: 21st/22nd May 2013

Reporting Inspector: Mrs A Barrett
Additional Inspector: Mrs B McLaughlin

Description of school

St Patrick's is an average sized single form entry Catholic primary school which serves the parishes of St Patrick's Corsham and St Anthony of Padua, Melksham. The proportion of Catholic pupils is 41%, with 55% from other Christian denominations. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.

The proportion of pupils who have an SEN statement or an educational health and care plan is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those speaking English as an additional language is well below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium is well below the national average.

Since the last inspection, there has been a decline in the number of Catholic pupils from the Melksham parish due to the cessation of denominational transport subsidy and the changing demography of the parish.

The headteacher, who has been in post since the last inspection, is the lead for RE and chaplaincy with aspects of the RE role delegated to two members of the senior leadership team. The RE link governor (who is a lay chaplain in one of the partner schools) provides voluntary support with chaplaincy.

The school celebrated its 50th anniversary in the summer of 2017. The school is an active member of the Catholic Camino Partnership of schools. The headteacher, a highly regarded member of the group, has been Chair of the Operation Committee for 6 years.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 1

This school is outstanding because:

- The provision, leadership and governance of the Catholic life, RE and prayer life of the school are all outstanding. Leaders and governors are strongly committed to developing the Catholic life and character of the school, seeing this as a core leadership responsibility.
- Pupils are happy, well-rounded, caring individuals who are extremely proud to belong to this exceptional Catholic community where 'All are Welcome'.
- The school provides a loving, prayer-centred and inclusive environment, with praying together an integral part of the daily experience for all.
- The headteacher is an exemplary Catholic leader who has a clear vision of outstanding teaching and learning, which is shared by teachers and governors.
- Staff promote high standards of behaviour and provide role models of mutual respect and forgiveness. The high quality of pastoral care in which every child is valued, has created an open, inclusive culture enabling all to develop and grow.

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- Almost all pupils make good progress in RE, in each key stage, with some achieving outstanding progress. This is because of highly effective teaching which motivates and engages, developing in pupils a high level of confidence in their ability to improve further.
 - Teachers are skilled practitioners who are fully committed to the teaching of RE and improving their pedagogy in the subject.
 - This is an outward looking Catholic school which sees its commitment to the Church's mission as going beyond St Patrick's, as expressed in its work to develop and strengthen the Catholic Camino Partnership.
 - The school is highly regarded by parents and has good links with the parish.

The capacity of the school community to improve is outstanding

The capacity of the school to improve remains outstanding for the reasons given above. In addition, the areas for development highlighted in the previous inspection have been addressed or superseded. Work has continued in relation to assessment and tracking of pupils' work, with the focus now on the trialling of new diocesan units of work and on the training of teachers to enable them to formally implement the new RE standards from September 2017. Chaplaincy has continued to grow and develop, with a significant improvement in pupil leadership in this area.

What the school should do to improve further

- In consultation with the diocese, share the outstanding practice in RE and chaplaincy with other Catholic schools within the Camino Partnership and other Catholic schools.
- Further enhance governance by embarking upon an annual self-evaluation in relation to Catholic life, RE and prayer life. The priorities should be to review vision, ethos and strategic direction, measure impact, and continue to support and provide challenge to the headteacher.
- Develop and consolidate teachers' subject knowledge in order to fully implement the new standards in RE.
- Embed the new diocesan units of work in RE, with a focus on developing pupils' skills of analysis and evaluation in AT3.

a) The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school

- Pupils are extremely proud of their school and, irrespective of their faith backgrounds, demonstrate a strong sense of belonging to this exceptional Catholic community.
- Pupils are articulate about what it means to be part of a Catholic school and embrace the demands that membership of this inclusive and welcoming community entails. For example, they demonstrate a clear sense of care and alertness to the needs of others through their active involvement in a range of outreach activities throughout the year, such as the Foodbank collection, local charities, CAFOD projects and Refugee Awareness Week.
- Pupils value opportunities to participate in the variety of focus days which promote and support the school's Catholic life and mission, and which strengthen the Catholic Camino Partnership. These have recently included a Year 3/4 day exploring *Laudato Si*, with opportunities for all year groups to participate in a retreat experience linked to this theme; a Year 5 annual global conference and annual retreat at Kilve Court, and participation in the Camino Celebration day with fellow partner schools which included Mass, followed by a procession, a Walk of Witness and picnic.
- Pupils take on positions of responsibility and leadership of Catholic life through a wide range of pupil councils, including the chaplaincy team (Sunshine Saints) and Fair-Trade Council. They consider that they are able to make decisions and take action on a number of issues, which they consider important. Older pupils are excellent role models for the younger ones.
- The large group of enthusiastic Sunshine Saints are developing their leadership skills in supporting, for example, the planning for 'CAFOD Caring Projects' and helping in the preparation for whole school Masses. They take the lead in distributing ashes at the Ash Wednesday service, the KS2 Lenten Reconciliation service and Advent and Holy Week reflections. A chaplaincy team meeting in which pupils were engaged in preparing a letter of welcome to new pupils in September, epitomised the school's clear focus on developing pupil leadership and on fully engaging them in the process. This, in turn, is supported through training within the Camino partnership, which has included training on prayer.
- The school's open and embracing approach to chaplaincy ensures that all are given opportunities to participate in supporting the Catholic life of the school through the *Footsteps in Faith* initiative. This initiative involves all pupils in

the school and rewards them by collecting a 'camino footprint' badge for every 5 criteria they successfully achieve. Pupils and staff were effusive in their praise of this new scheme and value the wide range of activities it offers to engage in 'chaplancy' opportunities in the everyday life of school.

- Behaviour is exemplary across the school, with pupils having a strong respect for themselves and others, saying that their favourite thing about the school is 'belonging to a family'. This palpable sense of belonging was evident in lessons, in worship and in pupils' articulation of the meaning of the pupil version of the mission statement which is clearly owned and understood by them.

b) The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The school's mission statement is central to its life. It is lived and understood by all and is at the heart of everything which the school does, with the pupils' version of 'Live, love and learn like Jesus' annually revisited in all classes, to ensure that it is truly 'owned' by them. Plans are in hand to evaluate and update the school mission statement in September 2018.
- The school's strong focus on inclusivity is highlighted in the 'All are Welcome in this Place' sign displayed in the reception area and, more importantly, lived out in the daily life of the school through engagement of all, especially those who present the most challenge.
- The school's commitment to developing chaplaincy for all is demonstrated in its development of the *Footsteps in Faith* awards (based on the diocesan *Leaders in Faith* awards). It has been warmly embraced by pupils and is a model of good practice for other schools.
- Staff promote high standards of behaviour and are exemplary role models of mutual respect and forgiveness. There is an equal emphasis placed as much on pastoral care as on academic excellence, with a strong behaviour policy and pastoral support which is embraced and understood by all. Pastoral support for pupils with emotional behaviour challenges is a particular strength and recognised and valued by parents in the parental questionnaires.
- There is an immensely strong sense of community at all levels, evident in the high quality of relationships that exist between staff and pupils.
- The school environment reflects its mission and identity through its vibrant RE displays within and outside the classrooms. These are highly effective in promoting the teaching of RE and supporting the school's Catholic character.
- The school's PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) and RSE (Relationship and Sex Education) reflect Catholic teachings and principles. However, work is in hand to update the current RSE programme and replace

it with a more up to date and relevant one recommended by the diocese. This new programme will be shared with all stakeholders before being implemented in November 2108.

c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- Leaders and governors are strongly committed to developing the Catholic life and character of the school, seeing this as a core leadership responsibility. However, this commitment to the Church's mission in education goes beyond St Patrick's, as expressed in their work to develop and strengthen the Catholic Camino Partnership. A fellow headteacher from a partner school took time out to speak to the inspection team about the considerable part played by the school in driving improvements in this area.
- Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The informed leadership of the headteacher, combined with a pro-active Governors' Strategic Committee, ensures that there is effective monitoring of the school's Catholic life provision and outcomes. This enables them to plan for future improvements both within the school and the Catholic partnership.
- Leaders and governors have worked hard to address the challenge of limited numbers of Catholic staff and Foundation governors. For example, effective distribution of the key elements of the RE lead role has resulted in the creation of a very effective RE team which is overseen by the headteacher, who remains the subject lead, but which plays to teachers' strengths. The headteacher, who is also the school's lay chaplain, is supported by the leadership team and RE link governor (a lay chaplain in a partner school). Again, this works very effectively, but care needs to be taken to ensure that this role of the governor remains strategic rather than operational.
- There is unequivocal and explicit evidence that the Catholic mission of the school is a priority, along with the spiritual and moral development of pupils. The headteacher and her deputy model strong practice, which staff seek to emulate.
- CPD on the Catholic Life of the school occurs frequently and is engaging, well planned and effective. As a result, staff have a shared and clear understanding of the school's mission and their role in implementing this. Governors allocate TD days on Mission and Identity annually, as well as ensuring appropriate training in RE, RSE, spirituality and collective worship.
- The school actively engages with diocesan policies and initiatives, with plans in hand for the governing body to evaluate and self-challenge against the bishop's threefold vision of Mission, Prayer and communion. A joint INSET

day on *'How do we Open Wide the Doors of the Church to Everyone?'* will take place in September, with other partner schools. This will focus on Catholic identity and school mission in the light of *A Future Full of Hope* and will provide an opportunity to review and update the school's mission statement, involving all stakeholders in the process.

- The school has effective strategies in place for engaging with parents, especially those who find working with the school difficult. Effective use is made of parental surveys to ascertain and build on parents' views, but consideration should be given to including a question on Catholic ethos and RE.

a) How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Almost all pupils make good progress in RE, in each key stage, with some achieving outstanding progress. There is no evidence of there being any significant variation between groups of pupils. Indeed, the school's open, inclusive culture has enabled all pupils to develop and grow, with disadvantaged pupils and those with particular needs making increased levels of progress. This is due to careful teacher planning and effective use of differentiation to meet the needs of learners.
- Overall, pupils demonstrate good, and often high, levels of religious literacy across the board. They are becoming very adept at using their knowledge and understanding of religious issues to make links between faith and life, which enables them to reflect spiritually and think ethically.
- Pupils enjoy their learning in RE and are confident in making links between faith and life. They are highly motivated, enthusiastic and keen to do well. They are diligent in their work, producing good outcomes. Teachers consider that this is due, in no small part, to the impact of trialling the new diocesan units. There has, in particular, been a noted improvement in teachers' use of questioning, which has resulted in pupils becoming more reflective and investigatory, and able to demonstrate a greater awareness of other beliefs and values around them.
- The innovative *Footsteps in Faith* initiative has also played an important part in enabling pupils to take more responsibility for their RE learning and become more effective in their self-evaluation. One Year 4 aptly described *Footsteps in Faith* as 'bringing to life, *'Live, Love and Learn like Jesus'*.
- Pupils' good conduct and positive attitude to learning reflects the school's efforts to promote high standards which are embedded in Gospel values. The excellent relations between teachers and pupils, the support provided by teaching assistants, combined with the new engaging RE curriculum, make a significant contribution to pupils enjoyment of RE.
- Pupils respond positively to teachers 'What I already know' sessions at the start of a new unit of study. This is valued by both pupils and staff, and has been highly effective in enabling teachers to establish a baseline in the first year of using the new units. Pupils demonstrate good levels of concentration and a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

b) The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- Overall, teaching is highly effective in promoting pupils' learning, enjoyment and progress in RE, with teachers consistently planning high quality lessons linked to pupils' current assessment and their knowledge of the individual. Teachers are growing in confidence in their delivery of the new, challenging, diocesan units of work.
- This highly effective teaching is due, in no small part, to the excellent training and support they regularly receive at the start of teaching each new unit, and to teachers' commitment to improving their knowledge of RE and church teaching. This personal commitment has even extended to staff buying their own copies of YouCat (Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church), and to 7 out of 10 teachers having completed or completing the CCRS (Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies).
- The regular training in RE is greatly valued by all and has enabled teachers to become more skilled in developing, consolidating and deepening pupils' knowledge and understanding in the subject. Teachers use their subject knowledge to plan learning that sustains pupils' interest and challenges their thinking. This was evident in a number of lessons, including an inspirational Year 5 follow up lesson (after a conference day on The Year of Mission) where the teacher skilfully challenged pupils to consolidate and deepen their understanding of mission, linking it to previous work on Pentecost on the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.
- Teachers use questioning skilfully to probe pupils' responses and they reshape tasks and explanations so that pupils better understand new religious concepts and ideas. They tackle misconceptions and build on pupils' strengths through on-going feedback in lessons.
- Teachers engender a 'can do' culture within their classrooms which enables pupils to learn from mistakes. There are well-planned opportunities to engage in independent and collaborative learning, with pupils confidently sharing ideas with their 'talking partners' a regular feature.
- The recent introduction into RE of 'Steps to Success' into RE, alongside the other core subjects, has enabled pupils to assess their own progress and for teachers to support them in their learning. However, the school is aware that this now needs to be further embedded across the Key Stage. Plans are in hand to address this as part of a review in the autumn term 2018.
- Teachers are highly effective in making links between faith and life, as demonstrated in a Year 4 lesson on the sacrament of Confirmation in which the teacher skilfully encouraged pupils to share their personal stories, using key words relating to this and other sacraments. The deployment of teaching

assistants is effective, with teachers ensuring that they are fully prepared for their role in providing one-to-one and small group support using structured interventions.

c) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum meets Bishops' Conference requirements in every respect and in each key stage. RE has full parity with other core curriculum subjects, including professional development, resourcing, staffing and accommodation.
- The additional requirements of the Bishop are met with the RE lead and her deputy attending all diocesan meeting and training as appropriate. The high number of teachers who have completed the CCRS (Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies) is to be commended and is a clear indication of the school's commitment to high quality teaching of RE.
- Leaders are actively engaged with all staff in improving systems for tracking and monitoring data in order to improve pupil outcomes, fully involving governors in the process. Moderation of pupils' work in RE, both internally and with partner Catholic schools, has been very effective in sharing expertise and providing support. This is especially important in this year of transition, trialling the new diocesan units for full implementation in September 2018.
- The school benefits considerably from having a headteacher who is also an exceptional curriculum leader for religious education, with a clear vision of outstanding teaching and learning in the subject. Not only does she have a high level of expertise in securing this vision but is gifted in sharing this with teachers and governors. The strong commitment of the headteacher to Catholic education is clearly evident in her pursuit of a *Masters in Leadership in Catholic Schools*, in which she is using her studies to further improve the RE and Catholic Life of the school.
- Leaders and governors have effective systems in place for tracking, monitoring and analysing the impact of the school's work in order to plan future improvements in provision and pupils' outcomes. This results in well targeted planning and action, such as the purchasing of a new system for tracking pupil progress to enable collaborative work with the Camino Partnership on monitoring progress in the new RE standards. This could be further strengthened by establishing an annual self-evaluation of governance in relation to RE, Catholic Life and Prayer Life.

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- The newly formed RE leadership team work well together, playing to their collective strengths. They have been very effective in monitoring standards in this first year of teaching the new units, meeting to identify areas of concern, improvements and strengths in teaching and learning over time. This information is central to informing priorities for RE's future development. It also ensures that RE is taught imaginatively and is well planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils across the board.
 - Leaders' and governors' provision of high quality and regular in-house 'Before You Begin' staff training has proved highly effective in improving provision and pupils' outcomes. It has been effective in ensuring that teachers' knowledge and understanding of theology and Christian tradition is accurate and that they are confident in delivery of materials provided by diocese.

a) How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's prayer life

- Pupils across the key stages demonstrate high levels of interest in the school's prayer life and they actively participate and engage in the rich provision it offers. In particular, there has been a significant improvement since the last inspection in enabling pupils to acquire skills in planning and leading prayer and worship. Consequently, the experience of living and working in this joyful, vibrant and prayerful community makes a significant contribution to the spiritual and moral development of all pupils, irrespective of ability or faith background.
- Pupils have a well-developed respect for those of other faiths and none, actively seeking to understand and empathise with each other. This is reflected in the way pupils prepare and participate in prayer and worship. The school is rightly proud of the exceptionally positive praise they received from Muslim families regarding how the school managed the teaching of Islam during Islam week, with pupils learning how to treat religious artefacts from other faiths with respect and welcoming visitors from the Wiltshire Islamic Cultural Centre.
- The strong focus on prayer, evident in the last inspection, remains an important feature of school life and continues to grow and develop. Pupils, irrespective of their faith background, embrace the opportunities provided for them to participate in prayer and collective worship at a level which is appropriate for them. They readily respond to opportunities to engage in traditional and contemporary approaches to music and prayer which use scripture and religious artefacts. This was evident in all of the assemblies observed, with pupils clearly absorbed and engaged in the process. They responded reverently at reflection points, sang hymns with gusto and joined in prayers with ease and confidence.
- There are well-planned opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school's prayer life in, for example, class led assemblies, in which each pupil takes part in leadership of the assembly twice a year. In addition, daily prayers and reflections actively involve pupils in a range of activities. Prayer tables in each class act as a reflective focus for daily prayer, with pupils increasingly becoming more responsible for their design. Some classes have prayer and RE display monitors, but this is an area for further development.
- The chaplaincy team (Sunshine Saints) have benefited from training provided by the RE link governor and headteacher on a range of activities to develop their skills in planning and leading prayer and worship. This has included,

preparing for Masses through writing reflections, composing Prayers of the Faithful and choosing hymns and artefacts for Mass. This, in turn, has enabled the team to gain confidence in planning and preparing whole school lunchtime devotions such as the Stations of the Cross during Lent, and Rosary devotions during May. Other pupils have responded positively to these opportunities for prayer created by their peers by their excellent attendance and engagement. In addition, the Sunshine Saints have developed an 'Everyday Prayer' book for all classes which is widely used by them. Plans are also in hand to devise a new school prayer to contribute to the Camino joint prayer book.

b) The quality of the prayer life provided by the school

- The school provides a loving, prayer-centred and inclusive environment for pupils and staff, whatever their faith background, with praying together an integral part of the daily experience for all. In addition, this is further celebrated in the vibrant displays and statues around the school and the POP (Place of Peace room). The rich provision for the prayer life of the school makes a significant contribution to the spiritual life of the whole school community.
- Key leaders have an excellent understanding of the liturgical year, seasons and feasts. They are very effective in ensuring that pupils and staff experience high quality experiences at these times, and they set high standards for other staff to emulate.
- There are close links between school and parish, with priests actively supportive through school Masses and Lenten and Advent Reconciliation services. This link is further strengthened through parishioners' involvement in the First Holy Communion preparation, the CAFOD, Share the Journey' walk and recent Camino Partnership Day. Links are further strengthened with parish and parents through the newsletter, with its regular information section on Mass, liturgies and celebrations.
- The significant improvement over the years in the involvement of all pupils in the preparation for whole school worship is due to increased staff training in this area as part of the annual staff training on developing spirituality and preparing for class Masses and liturgy. This, combined with excellent role modelling by leaders, is enabling all staff to become increasingly skilled in developing this important aspect of the school's life.
- Pupils' prayer life is further enriched through an extensive range of prayer opportunities outside the classroom. This has included focus days with fellow pupils from the Camino Partnerships, retreat experiences, Witness walks and

participation in whole school faith events such as the 'Big Me Week' where pupils were invited to reflect on Pope Benedict's message from Big Assembly.

c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the prayer life of the school

- Leaders and governors have created a culture of high expectations in relation to all aspects of the school's prayer life and they are highly effective in its promotion. They ensure that prayer and collective worship is given priority in terms of planning, evaluating and resourcing and they engage in a range of monitoring activities. This could be further strengthened by involving the new RE/chaplaincy governor more formally in the process and guarding against his role being operational rather than strategic.
- The head, deputy headteacher and RE link governor have expert knowledge in planning and delivering high quality prayer and collective worship and provide excellent role models for all. They are knowledgeable about the liturgical rhythms of a Catholic community and have the pedagogical skills to engage and involve pupils in meaningful prayer experiences, ensuring that they are accessible to pupils. They place a strong focus on faith and action in their assemblies and respond to local, national and global events with prayer opportunities.
- Professional development and support in training staff in planning collective worship and prayer, is of a very high calibre and occurs on a regular basis. In addition, the head and deputy headteacher are very effective in supporting and signposting staff and pupils in accessing a range of prayer and worship ideas and resources. They, in turn, are completely in tune with all diocesan initiatives and are regular attenders at diocesan training. They also lead the Camino Partnership RE subject leaders group and chaplains' group, showing their commitment to the Church's mission in education.
- Staff, in turn, model and support important prayer opportunities in the school community such as First Holy Communion, Diocesan Education Mass, Year 6 Leavers' Mass and liturgy for new Reception parents.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were **93** parental questionnaires received. They were extremely positive about the school and their children's education. Some typical responses included:

'Strong sense of family and excellent support provided for children'

'Caring, nurturing and inclusive school. We love the Catholic ethos and that the school is small and caring... I am so proud of being a member of this unique and supportive community'

'The school is led by a great headteacher and deputy'

'A lovely feel where we have always felt that the teachers and headteacher know and understand our son so well'

'Every teacher knows every child's name. The teachers are willing and available to discuss any concerns that I have'

'The teachers go over and above and the children follow their lead'

'The school is so friendly and the staff and pupils so caring. The school instils values and a Christian faith at its heart'

'I feel very strongly that St Patrick's RC Primary School exceeds expectations in all areas. We are extremely lucky to have this as our local Catholic primary school'

'We liked the warm feel of the school and the Catholic, caring ethos'

Footsteps in Faith is brilliant – my children are enthused with this focus and have enjoyed it'