



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and Inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
of the Education Act 2005

URN 100173

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School
Griffin Road
Plumstead
London SE18 7QG

Inspection date: 4 June 2014

Chair of Governors:	Mrs Kathy Elliffe
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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Greenwich Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Greenwich Local Authority. The principal parishes which the school serves are St Patrick's, Plumstead and Holy Cross, Plumstead Common with some other pupils worshipping the neighbouring parishes of St David's and St Benet's, Thamesmead and St Peter's, Woolwich. A number of families are also in attendance at local independent African churches. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 91%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in all Key Stages.

The school and nursery take pupils from 3 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 360. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is significantly below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals at 13% is above average. Around 14% of the pupils receive extra support in class. The intake to the school is made up of a wide range of ethnic diversity. The majority of pupils are of Black African heritage which is a reflection of the school's local community. The majority of pupils are from homes where English is an additional language, which is above average, although only a small number are at the earliest stages of learning a language.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school in providing Catholic Education

GRADE
2

St Patrick's is a good school with an increasing number of outstanding elements. Excellent relationships and the close cooperation of the whole school team are a key strength of the school. It has successfully actioned the points for improvement identified in the last inspection. The school has a mantra of following in the footsteps of its patron St Patrick when he prayed, 'Christ be within me'. There is clarity of purpose across the whole school community that sees Christ and His teachings at the centre of all that is done. The pupils thrive in a loving, caring environment, where all adults strive to do the very best for them. It is noteworthy that Ofsted inspectors commented that, 'everyone is working together for the same aim'. The Catholic ethos influences every aspect of school life with committed leadership from the headteacher and governors, who together work within a supportive partnership, that is effective in maintaining and growing the Catholicity of the school.

Pupils confirm that they feel safe and cared for and they are polite and respectful. Attendance is high and behaviour around the school is very good.

Daily collective worship is at the heart of school life, with two weekly whole school assemblies, weekly key stage assemblies, as well as class assemblies. Focal areas in every class are of a very high standard. They are consistent across the school and valued by pupils. They are themed and changed regularly to reflect the liturgical calendar and help the children as they respond well to opportunities to pray. Pupils grow in understanding and knowledge of their faith. The school has adopted 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' Religious Education programme introduced in September, 2013, which has been very well received by staff and pupils. A cohesive sense of teamwork is evident in the way teachers have embraced the scheme, which is used to comprehensively cover the core programmes of study for all Key Stages. Teachers are beginning to bring their own creativity and faith experience to the teaching of Religious Education.

Opportunities for spiritual and moral development are very good. Working closely with the parish priest, the sacramental life of the school is lived through weekly class masses linked to the current class Religious Education topic, aspects of the liturgical year or related feast day theme. All year groups enjoy taking an active part in both the preparation and participation in their Mass as they are seated close to the altar enabling them to have the opportunity to observe the priest at first hand in the school's intimate chapel. Whole school masses are celebrated on Holy Days and the school's feast day in the parish church and are well attended by both parents and parishioners. Pupils are given the opportunity to partake in the Sacrament of Reconciliation each term as a number of priests from the deanery visit the school together. First Holy Communion preparation is undertaken by parish catechists and is actively supported by the school staff.

The school is based in a very well maintained Victorian building which has been impressively adapted to maximise space. It provides a bright and welcoming learning environment for pupils and working environment for staff within a very restrictive space. The school's Mission Statement is a living document in which all stakeholders have ownership. It has been reviewed in the last year with pupils creating 'child-speak' versions. Its prominence throughout the school and in documentation has secured the values it promotes among the whole school community.

As a parent wrote, *"We are very happy with St Patrick's School. All staff give so much to each child's teaching – 100% all round"*.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- Continue work already underway to further enhance the strong home/school/parish links in support of the Salvatorian Fathers in their first year in the parish and their work serving a resurgent Catholic community.
- Embed the new religious education scheme whilst ensuring standards in RE continue to match the high levels in other core subjects and provide more opportunities for independent learning and research.

Publication date ... 3 July 2014

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is very good. Pupils have a deep sense of belonging to their school family. They value the many opportunities they are given. Pupils enthusiastically and effectively promote the Catholic ethos in a range of activities from charity fundraising that includes, The Manna Homeless Centre, CAFOD, Mary's Meals and Well-Child to roles of responsibility such as School Council and Prefects. Pupils feel they are listened to and would welcome further opportunities to take on responsibilities. Parents and pupils expressed appreciation of after school activities, which they felt could be expanded.

They see these roles as important through their interaction with others and understanding of the commandment to 'love thy neighbour as thyself'.

Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the school for personal support and development. Pupils are happy, confident and secure with their own stage of spiritual and emotional growth. An effective programme for Education for Personal Relationships and Sex Education was approved by the school's governors in the Spring Term 2012. This allows pupils to develop and foster excellent understanding, appropriate to their age within a Catholic context. The programme is based on the 'All that I am' programme and is rooted in the Diocesan policy for 'Education in Human Love'. Parents are kept informed of the programme and are very supportive of it.

Pupils work well together. Their behaviour is extremely good and they are polite, well-mannered and considerate of others. They are aware of the importance of spiritual values showing an interest in, and developing knowledge of, the religious life of others. The school is to be commended for its sensitive approach to the teaching of other faiths in the context of the backgrounds and experiences of the families of its pupils, whilst providing an appropriate curriculum in this regard. Pupils are taught to have respect for other cultures and traditions and the diversity of world religions. In the new 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' scheme Judaism forms an integral part of the programme, throughout the topics and year groups, as the children learn about Old Testament salvation history. A discrete focus on another world faith takes place in the summer term with the Religious Education leader taking part in the community school Religious Education exchange as she visits a partner school to talk about Christianity while their Muslim Deputy Head visits to explain aspects of her religion and culture to Year 6 pupils. The lower juniors will visit the local Sikh Woolwich Gurdwara. At Key Stage 1 and in the Early Years children learn about other cultural celebrations linked to Buddhism and Hinduism with the Chinese New Year and Diwali.

The school is a prayerful and fun loving community that provides a stimulating learning environment that reflects the school's mission and Catholic character. Pastoral care for pupils is outstanding, as a result of the commitment of all stakeholders and through having clear policies and structures in place.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

Almost all pupils enjoy and understand the value of Religious Education and are keen to

do well. Pupils show an interest and enthusiasm in their learning, they work well, try hard at activities set and mostly work at a good pace. Their Religious Education knowledge is developing well along with an ability to reflect on meaning that sees a growing depth of ability to reflect on the impact of religious ideas on their daily lives.

Outcomes for pupils are good overall. On entry data indicates that a significant proportion of pupils (50%) are within age related expectations in the prime areas of learning but a number of pupils enter school with skills below those typically expected of their age.

The overwhelming majority of pupils are baptised Catholics with a small number coming from other Christian traditions. The early years provides pupils with an excellent foundation on which the subsequent Key Stages successfully build. Progress is sustained as a result of the consistent approaches adopted as pupils progress through the school, which provides a very secure learning environment for pupils in which they flourish. There is clear evidence that standards across the school continue to rise with pupils reaching or exceeding age related expectations by the end of Key Stage 2. The school is appropriately focussed on raising attainment even further to ensure within Religious Education, as with other areas, increasingly higher percentages of pupils exceed age related expectations. Pupils' experiences of being part of a praying community have enabled all pupils to be thoughtful and reflective irrespective of background.

Pupils value their Religious Education books in which they show considerable pride. Books are very well presented, reflect good subject coverage and benefit from opportunities for pupils to respond to developmental marking. Differentiation is strong by outcome and opportunities could be taken to develop this further by task and through a less didactic approach that offers greater opportunities for independent learning and research.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

Prayer shapes the day at St Patrick's, with daily opportunities for collective worship. Whole school, Key Stage and class assemblies are of a good standard, are a central part of school life and are seen as opportunities to come together to share and reaffirm faith. The weekly class masses, Holy Day and termly whole school Masses are a celebratory and unifying focus for the whole school community. The liturgical year is marked in a special way at Easter and Christmas when the most significant events in the life of Jesus are re-enacted in drama, music and dance. The end of every term is marked with Benediction for the whole school and parents. The daily parish Mass takes place in the school chapel and the school community feels strengthened by the prayers of the parishioners.

The pupils from Nursery to Year 6 are nurtured and guided in the development of their own personal relationship with God through experiencing a range of different forms of prayer, as well as times of silence and reflection which recognises the individuality of 'faith journey'. Pupils respond extremely well to these opportunities engaging with respect and reverence. During the month of November the children are invited to write prayers for the school book of remembrance and voluntarily join with members of staff to pray part of the rosary during the month of May. Advent and Lenten promises are taken very seriously by the children. Most recently the junior children have responded enthusiastically to the fortnightly Bible challenge quiz.

A cohesive programme of assemblies is planned each term, where the everyday experiences and choices of life are explored in relation to scripture and the lives of

Christian men and women. Evidence of the impact of this sharing of faith may be observed across all areas of the curriculum as children frequently consider everything in the light of faith. For example, the pupils have a strong sense of empathy and fair play bringing aspects of the Religious Education curriculum into class discussions in a history topic on the causes of the Second World War. Recently in a geography/ literacy topic on South Africa pupils considered issues around justice when studying the contrasting living conditions of children in Soweto. These examples exemplify strong developing cross curricular links that will stand the school in good stead with the introduction of the New National Curriculum and will enable Religious Education to be at the centre of developments.

Staff take great care in their preparation for the provision of worship and the liturgical life of the school and phase leaders as well as the Religious Education leader support less experienced colleagues.

Publication date ... 3 July 2014

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

Catholic life at St Patrick's is well promoted, monitored and evaluated. The provision for the Catholic life of the school and in the way it is planned and implemented secures ongoing improvement to outcomes for pupils. The Headteacher and governors see it as the core mission of St Patrick's, that it grows in the love of God and their neighbour as a community, through a robust and challenging Religious Education curriculum. This is complemented by daily prayer and liturgical celebrations incorporating the sacramental life of the Church. All policies set clear direction and are in harmony with this vision and with the school mission statement. Leadership and management self-evaluation feeds into the school improvement plan with targets and success criteria set for improvement. Religious Education is appropriately Target One of the School Improvement Plan. The school's aims and practical objectives direct and guide every aspect of school life and are a useful tool by which the school evaluates its effectiveness. The Headteacher provides excellent focused leadership and lives out her vision successfully creating a caring and hardworking community. It is evident from the self-evaluation statement provided for this inspection that governors and staff have a clearly articulated understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and as a result. St Patrick's has a strong capacity to improve further. The inspectors have been able to validate these judgements. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and managed effectively. It provides strong evidence of the school's monitoring and self-challenge. It could now usefully be reviewed to align it with the current inspection framework as part of the school's ongoing self-evaluation programme. Governors know their school well and fulfil their responsibilities. They have effectively helped to shape the direction of the school and continue to do so. Governors take pride in the school's very close and well established links with the parish community and are proactive in holding the school to account and in moving the school forward.

The Parish Priest is a central part of the school family. He is fully supportive, for example, visiting school regularly and celebrating Masses with the school community. There are positive relationships at every level within the school. Collective Worship is effectively monitored and evaluated and a suitable policy is in place. The school is embracing the Archbishop's vision by participating in closer working relationships between Catholic schools as a member of the Catholic Teaching Alliance, forging partnerships with other primary and secondary schools with exciting opportunities for teacher training. The school took an active part in all the Diocesan Year of Faith celebrations including the production of the cluster's Year of Faith book. As part of the school's commitment to building the capacity of its teachers through CPD, six teachers have attended diocesan school commission's courses to revisit the Catholic dimension to their practice. Through individual performance management target setting the school continually supports the development of the future leaders of Catholic education in the Southwark Diocese and recently congratulated a member of the senior leadership team on her promotion to Assistant Headteacher in another Catholic school.

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leaders and governors promote monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education at the school extremely well. Governors are regular visitors to the school giving generously of their time. They are both supportive and challenging in seeking the very best provision for their pupils. Their conscious efforts and proactivity in securing high quality staff and awareness of the importance of succession planning is an exemplar. The subject leader is successfully continuing to build on previous good practice in managing and leading Religious Education. She shows great commitment in her role and introduces new initiatives when appropriate. She is accurate in her review of strengths and areas for development for Religious Education. Continuing professional development opportunities are provided for staff. Communication with the headteacher, staff, parents and governors is very effective. Self-evaluation is clear in identifying targets, timescales and lines of accountability. The school commendably undertakes a regular triangulation of evidence through looking at books, learning walks, lesson observations and assessment outcomes of pupil progress over time. From this they assess that teaching in Religious Education is at least good and inspectors are able to confirm this view. The Parish Priest plays an active and highly valued part in the Religious Education curriculum and wider life of the school. He ensures governors are well informed about this area.

Data monitoring is used effectively to evaluate the schools performance and plan for future improvements. Provision in Religious Education is monitored by the Religious Education leader along with members of the senior leadership team in a timetabled plan of monitoring. Feedback is given to phase leaders and individuals through performance management and pupil progress meetings. Formal assessment tasks are undertaken in line with the chosen scheme 'The Way, The Truth and The Life'. Assessment information is collated and tracked by the subject leader and shared with the leadership team, governors and parents as appropriate. Achievement and effort at St Patrick's is always celebrated. Parents receive termly Religious Education newsletters to provide them with a better understanding of the topics covered and how they can support their children at home. At the end of each academic year parents receive a written report on their children, including Religious Education.

Parents are also encouraged to support the spiritual development of their child at home being provided with the interactive activity packs for Advent and Lent as well as praying during May, as each child received a rosary during the May procession this year. The Wednesday Word is promoted and has a section specifically for parents. Pupils are encouraged to reason for themselves and make good choices with a sure grounding in the teachings of the Gospels. Staff work tirelessly, with individual children and their parents to explore the roots of any difficulties to work together to guide them on their life journey. The school has taken part in the local 'Early Help' project with workshops on empowering parenting skills.

The school's Religious Education leader is due to relocate at the end of this academic year and will be a significant loss to the school. Due to her very high standard of documentation and strength of subject leadership her successor will be well placed to continue to move the Religious Education curriculum forward.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

The quality of teaching and purposeful learning is good in ensuring that pupils are interested, engaged and make good progress. Teachers' planning on the whole is effective in meeting the needs of the pupils. Displays round the school are impressive and are used well to celebrate Religious Education and the work of pupils. Teachers display very good subject knowledge and deploy a range of teaching approaches. Pupils meet a degree of challenge which enriches their enjoyment of Religious Education. There is clear evidence that the majority of teachers reflect on pupils' prior learning when planning Religious Education lessons. Good use is made of time and resources. Technology is used effectively, together with the support provided by other adults to optimise learning.

A Year 2 lesson provided pupils with an experience of 'awe and wonder' as they marched singing to the playground, prayed together and then released their individual balloons to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. This was supported by some thoughtful writing on when they experienced the power of the Holy Spirit showing understanding at their level. Teaching at St Patrick's is solidly good with some outstanding features. Lesson planning and classroom management are strengths and provide a good learning environment for pupils. All lessons begin in a prayerful atmosphere and encourage pupils to reflect on their relationship with God.

Pupils are positively affirmed throughout their lessons. Marking informs pupils of their progress and clearly identifies how they can improve further. Effort and achievement are celebrated. The school has implemented assessment strategies which provide information on the achievement of all pupils. The tracking of pupils' work in Religious Education has been maintained over a period of time with trends showing that standards are improving steadily. Moderation takes place across the school. Where appropriate, the subject leader supports this on a one to one basis which the school feels has added to the quality assurance of this curriculum area.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning is developing well particularly in regard to meeting pupils' individual needs. The school uses 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' programme. Of the total curriculum time at least 10% is allocated to Religious Education in all Key Stages fulfilling the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Planning ensures full coverage of the Religious Education programme with planned strategies being deployed to enrich pupils' learning at times. The school implements new curriculum developments as appropriate and this is customised to meet the needs of groups and individuals.

The school has a variety of excellent links with a Catholic schools' cluster within the Deanery and these links support both Religious Education provision and subject leadership support.

Pupils have explored the beliefs and values of other faiths and religions. Pupils understand the importance of prayer in their own lives; they enjoy collective worship and are attentive and responsive. Liturgical life, prayer and collective worship provide a template for pupils' spiritual and moral development. The increased attendance at weekly Class Masses by

parents and families is setting a great example to the pupils and is very much welcomed by both them and school staff.

St Patrick's prides itself on being a welcoming school in the heart of the multi-cultural, multi faith community of Plumstead, reflecting the parish prayer 'All are welcome in this house'. They rightly describe themselves as being a truly 'catholic' and universal school recognising they are drawn from all corners of the world yet are united in a common faith and baptism. Inclusion of all pupils is seen by staff and governors as being at the heart of the well-being of the community. Respecting differences and valuing diversity can be seen throughout the school day, in the teaching and pastoral care. Pupils are aware that they are one family and must show this in their daily lives. This is evident in their class discussions and how they show care and respect for others in the playground and around the school.

As a parent commented, *"St Patrick's is a school whose ethos is building/developing children's faith in God."*

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good. It reflects the Catholic character of the school and is inclusive to all pupils at St Patrick's. Collective Worship has a high profile and is central to the life of the school. Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils. The school provides many opportunities for staff to develop skills in planning, leading and evaluating Collective Worship. Staff regularly take part in celebrations linked to the Religious Education programme in addition to the liturgical year. The teachers provide appropriate resources and opportunities to help pupils acquire the skills necessary to plan, lead and participate in Collective Worship. Pupils are enabled to pray formally and informally using a variety of prayer methods and styles.

Opportunities are provided to enable full, active and conscious participation of the whole school community. For example, there are regular end of topic celebrations and the school holds regular class and whole school Masses with opportunities being provided for parents, carers the local and wider faith communities to participate in a variety of celebrations. A carefully planned programme of Masses, assemblies and class based celebrations ensures that prayer and worship continue to be central to the daily life of the school.

The diversity of provision afforded to pupils ensures inclusive engagement with learning and personal faith development both within the formal class setting and wider corporate life of the school. In year group Masses children are directly involved in the planning and preparation of the Mass by choosing hymns, writing and leading bidding prayers and psalms. They take part in the offertory procession, while older children serve Masses and are directly involved in developing themes for their Mass.

A class assembly on the topic of Pentecost was well supported by enthusiastic singing. Pupils were attentive, prayed reverently and reflected on the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The worship was enhanced by liturgical dance. Technical problems were well managed although the need to use microphones could be reconsidered.