



INSPECTION REPORT

St Peter's Catholic Primary School

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DfE Number: 916 3370

Headteacher: Mrs Carol Baron

Chair of Governors: Mr James Evans

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: 10-11th March 2016
Date of previous inspection: February 10th 2011

Reporting Inspector: Mr J Skivington
Additional Inspector: Mrs Michele Marshall

Description of School

St Peter's is an above average sized Catholic primary school within the Diocese of Clifton, serving the Catholic community of Gloucester. There are currently 424 pupils on roll, of whom 99% are baptised Catholics. Pupils come from mixed socio economic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with EAL has increased in recent years and stands at 47%. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is below national average. The school is oversubscribed with very little fluctuation in pupil numbers. There have been a number of staff changes since September. The RE leadership is at present shared between the head and deputy head teacher and the Chaplaincy leader.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Requires improvement in order to be good; Grade 4: Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 1

This is an outstanding school because:

- Very effective formal structures and rigorous processes to monitor and evaluate the quality of Catholic life have led to outstanding outcomes, and have ensured that the promotion of the school's Catholic life is at the centre of all that it does.
- Inspiring school leadership together with the governing body, has successfully communicated a clear vision and high expectations which has brought about improvement in every aspect of the Catholic life of the school
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, as is their proactive involvement in the Catholic life of the school. They can discuss the quality of their learning fluently and with impressive insight.
- The school is highly regarded by parents, who feel the school listens to their views and acts upon them.
- The quality of teaching in RE is consistently good, with much that is outstanding, resulting in outstanding progress in learning and achievement over time.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

- The areas for development highlighted at the last diocesan inspection have been comprehensively addressed and transformed into strengths, particularly the growth of the chaplaincy team with full pupil involvement. Progress in written activities is evident

over time and reflects the full range of assessment opportunities. The RE syllabus is well embedded and constantly re shaped and planned with the result it is increasingly better tailored to the learning needs of all groups of pupils

- Leadership and governance is very effective in promoting, monitoring and evaluating, both the provision for the Catholic life of the school and religious education. Staff morale and commitment is very high, and the school leadership has the full support of parents and pupils. The school has proven and reliable capacity to sustain its outstanding quality of provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- To provide further opportunities for pupils across all year groups to be able to engage in more extended, reflective writing on the topics they are learning

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

Grade 1

All pupils benefit enormously from the vibrant Catholic life of the school and make a significant contribution towards its ethos, not only by their excellent behaviour and care for each other, but also by their close involvement in planning, presenting, and evaluating their prayer life. This is demonstrated particularly, but in no way exclusively, by the lively chaplaincy team, who are drawn from all year groups. In a wonderfully stimulating Catholic environment, with displays and interactive boards, every pupil has the opportunity to reflect on their learning and the theology behind it; for instance, a daily search for the 'wise owls' who pose spiritual and ethical questions to which they can respond immediately with post it notes. As a result, pupils are used to thinking about their faith and are very confident in expressing their voice and opinions through verbal feedback and questionnaires. They would benefit further by being encouraged to reflect in a written form on their faith. Pupils also take the initiative in fundraising events supporting local and global charity organisations. There are close links with life in the parish and participation in the Sunday Mass, with enthusiastic servers and readers. As a consequence the community feels and thinks of itself as part of the wider mission of the Church. The parish priests are a very welcomed, inspiring, supportive and frequent presence in the school.

Learning from religion, as well as about religion, is a key element in the school's approach and it is evident in their care and support for others, their role modelling, and the support of the older pupils for the younger ones. They are offered encouragement and opportunities to internalise the values that the school strives to inculcate and the school seeks to make strong connections between faith and life. In conversations with pupils they were impressively reflective, honest and articulate in identifying what made them learn better, what teaching challenged, engaged and excited them, and what approaches left them less engaged and involved. The school might consider also a whole school community revisiting of the school mission statement to reflect on and interpret what it means to each individual and the part each can play.

Pupils involve themselves with enthusiasm in collective worship, in the Mass, in assemblies, hymn practice and class prayers. They are confident when challenged to be creative and meaningful in their worship. The invitation to participate is inclusive- all are invited to take part regardless of faith background - and they do. They have taken on the challenge of planning and evaluating prayer and liturgy and are eager to be left more to use their initiative. Pupils compose simple, meaningful prayers, which then find their way to the class 'altars' to be used in daily prayer: for example, a prayer of praise – a litany of Thanks for Creation. They are keen to do even more to become animators in the school. They have already had input into the spiritual garden, and planned for the Year of Mercy.

Pupils' attainment and achievement in Religious Education is outstanding. From a low baseline, pupils make rapid progress through the early years, so that by the end of Key Stage 1 they are meeting, and many exceeding, diocesan expectation. In Key Stage 2 progress is very similar so that, even by Year 5, most have matched diocesan expectations with more able pupils exceeding the expected levels of knowledge and understanding of the Faith. Teachers are clearly committed to bringing about improvement across all outcomes for students. They understand that there is always a need to question more, to check understanding but also to enable pupils to go deeper into the subject. It would be helpful for pupils to have more time in lessons to write reflectively at length, which would match {and record} over time their already secure learning from religion, and the relevance that it has for them. There is no significant underachievement from any group of students. Pupils with special learning needs are very well supported by proactive learning assistants, as are those with EAL. Behaviour for learning in lessons is outstanding.

There are numerous opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to participate in the prayer life of the school, including Masses, whole school liturgies, assemblies, chaplaincy, and retreats, which the pupils enjoy and appreciate. The Church's liturgical year is lived fully as is clear in the many colourful and stimulating displays around the school, and the wealth of photographic evidence and assembly records. Classes follow the events of Holy Week through their God Matters programme and respond through Penitential Services and the Stations of the Cross. The Advent season was marked by the Advent Hour of Prayer, which was very successfully received, evaluated by pupils and led to plans to repeat and build on this initiative. The RE syllabus includes a study of other religions and pupils benefit from speakers as well as visits to other places of worship and faith.

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

Grade 1

Governors and leaders work very successfully together to ensure that the promotion of the school's Catholic life is at the centre of its strategic direction. This is immediately evident to any visitor to the school and is the result of constant review and improvement. The whole school community is enveloped in a stimulating very Catholic environment, which adorns the building in order to educate and challenge everyone to reflect on their Faith and how they can live it out in their daily lives. Provision for staff induction and INSET, which further develops an understanding and commitment to the Church's mission in education, is strong. New teachers to the school are very well supported. Links with the diocese are effective and all Bishop's Conference requirements fulfilled.

Self-evaluation of the school's Catholic life is of a high order, robust, challenging individuals to be objective and ambitious about what can be developed, as well as being clear and concise

about achievements. Inset days primarily reflect on how the school can better nurture and promote the Catholic identity of the school and RE. As a result, the home learning diaries reinforce Catholic values, while the school website and newsletters inform and educate the whole school community. The Year of Mercy has been successfully planned together with the pupils themselves, and has a high current profile. The head teacher's vision is successfully and very effectively communicated to all levels of the school community with outstandingly effective outcomes. Regular feedback surveys ensure that the views of pupils and parents inform future planning. Links with parents are especially strong. The school is highly regarded by parents, who consider it to be excellent in its provision and Catholic ethos.

Governors ensure close oversight of Catholic life and Religious Education through an increasingly hands on involvement in school life. There is a growing record of their analysis of reviews and reports and what feedback was given in terms of questioning, challenge and action to be taken. Together with the diocese and the head teacher they are becoming a more knowledgeable and critical group who hold the school to account through processes, which are increasingly rigorous, robust and dependable.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 1

Teaching is consistently good over time with much that is outstanding, and leads to outstanding progress across both key stages. Teachers are knowledgeable and have a strong rapport with the pupils. They use paired discussion well to allow every child to contribute and from this one can hear a good degree of religious literacy. This would be enhanced further by providing more opportunities for them to express their thoughts in more extended, reflective writing tasks. Learning is outstanding because teachers teach for meaning, and as a result pupils not only have a secure factual knowledge, but a deepening understanding of the theology behind what they are learning and its relevance to their own lives.

Pupils say that they enjoy those lessons most where they do not have to sit over long listening, but after short, focussed paired discussion and clear direction, can get on with their activity or written task. Pupils are extremely well behaved and sustain high levels of concentration in class, even when inspiration or challenge occasionally flags. Lesson observations, learning walks and book scrutinies are frequently and fruitfully carried out to raise and sustain the outstanding level of teaching and learning.

Assessment processes are leading to improved learning over time, because individual pupils and groups are identified and teaching is more accurately tailored to their learning needs. Vital to this process is the constant check for accuracy especially in referencing levels of attainment. Marking of students' work is well embedded, providing them in the main with clear, formative comments. Time set in lessons for pupils' responses will ensure their quality and enable them to better understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

The Religious Education curriculum meets all Bishops' Conference requirements and is responsive to diocesan guidelines. It is carefully planned to link with the *Catholic Curriculum Directory*, ensuring full coverage of the Religious Education syllabus. The school works closely with the parish on the sacramental preparation programme. The curriculum is fully inclusive and meets the needs of students of all ages irrespective of their backgrounds. Differentiated resources are produced for each scheme of work and adapted by teachers for each group, enabling students to build on prior knowledge and experience and make appropriate progress in relation to their ability. Pupils explore topics such as Fair Trade, Slavery, Equal Rights, Climate Change/Stewardship of the Earth in some depth. They have a good understanding of other world religions through the syllabus but also through visiting speakers and visits to other places of worship. The older pupils went to an Ignite meeting and are involved in the Philippines Challenge. Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and vocational development are promoted well.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 108 parental questionnaires returned. All were positive in their views of the school, highlighting a strong sense of community, Catholic ethos, inspiring leadership, respected in the local community, praise for the inspiring head teacher, caring staff and strong moral Christian values. Only four parents felt they were not kept informed about their children's progress in RE, and three of the same parents were unclear about the content of the relationship and sex programme. Some typical responses to the question, 'Why did you choose this school?' included:

'This school is characterised by a high level of religious education.'

'We wanted a school that would nurture our children's spirit as well as having a great education.'

'The school provides an environment in which children grow spiritually and mentally, and prepares them to be responsible individuals.'

'The Catholic ethos is not just a mission statement, but a way of living out core values'.

'Teachers really care in this school.'

'All staff are approachable and listen to my worries.'

'My children develop a really good understanding of the Faith.'