



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **St. Paul's Catholic Primary School**

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DfES Number: 8033438

URN: 109269

Head teacher: Mrs Maxine Sewell

Chair of Governors: Mrs Carol Lawler

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**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**

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Date of inspection: 28-29 September 2017

Date of previous inspection: March 2012

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington

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## **Description of the school**

St. Paul's is a single-form entry Catholic primary school with 206 pupils on roll, 49% of whom are Catholic. The school serves the parishes of St. Paul, Yate and St. Lawrence, Chipping Sodbury. Many pupils come from challenging socio-economic backgrounds. Ethnic minority groups make up 39% of the total and SEN pupils 21%. A rising percentage of pupils (39%) have English as an additional language (EAL). There is a recent growth in the number of Pupil Premium children. The level of prior attainment on entry to the school lies below national expectation.

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)**

**Grade 2**

This is a good school because:

- It is an inclusive and welcoming school where pupils and their families, from all faiths and none, are warmly invited into the school community.
- The school has strong, good leadership which has sustained and nurtured its Catholic life and ethos, although it needs to take further steps to improve provision and outcomes for the subject RE.
- The governing body is a knowledgeable and practical influence in the Catholic life of the school.
- The pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They demonstrate care and respect for each other and have a positive attitude to learning.
- The pupils, particularly in the Chaplaincy Team, make a good contribution towards Catholic life and pupils' response to the prayer life of the school is good.

## **The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is good**

- The governors and senior leadership are committed to developing and improving the Catholic life of the school.
- The school is a partner in the local cluster of Catholic schools, receiving support and offering good practice, and this is helping drive improvement.
- The school is aware that the quality of teaching and learning across the school is inconsistent and requires improvement, in order that all pupils can make better progress towards good achievement over time. It has already identified its strengths and weaknesses and has drawn up plans to improve practice and outcomes.
- The areas for improvement noted in the last inspection have been addressed, but have not yet been fully secured. The use of assessment and the analysis of pupil progress is now securely in place and accurate, but is not yet used consistently to inform learning objectives, and therefore it has had a limited impact on enhancing achievement over

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time. Also, while there is a good proportion of good, and some outstanding, teaching, there is inconsistent practice across the key stages. The leadership accepts it needs a more robust, detailed and challenging approach to correct where the weaknesses lie.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the impact and effectiveness of the leadership of RE by more rigorous and systematic monitoring of pupils' learning outcomes and presentation of work.
- Employ more effective curriculum planning and design, in order to ensure more challenging learning and lesson objectives for all pupils.
- Deepen and secure teachers' RE subject knowledge where needed, especially where it is insufficiently wide ranging, in order to encourage real intellectual effort from pupils, especially the more able.

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

Grade 2

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

- Catholic life and the pupils' contribution to it is a strength of the school. Pupils demonstrate an appreciation of the distinctive nature of the school and express what it means for them. One pupil said: 'God is loving, so we should be loving too. God gave us life, so we should be giving also'. Their understanding is articulated clearly in their conversation and in the beautifully presented Class Worship books, which record their own pupil-planned worship but also their insightful responses to the school's values through the St. Paul's Way and the Journey to the City of Values.
- The Chaplaincy Team take the lead in promoting the Catholic life of the school, and are developing the skills of planning and organising their own liturgies. They are proactive in making the Chapel space a focal area for prayer. They also plan and run clubs throughout the year which have a seasonal focus such as the Rosary Club in October and May, as well as sessions on Religious Art and Meditation.
- The pupils can talk about the impact that the prayer life of the school has on their view of life and their relationship with others, understanding the links between faith and action, reflected also in British values. Their own composed prayers are relevant and heartfelt. They accept and flourish in an atmosphere of faith and spirituality.
- Older pupils increasingly take on a range of responsibilities, Year 6 for example being 'buddied up' with the Reception children, demonstrating they are alert to the needs of others. Pupils were also involved in the recent vision review of the school's mission 'Raising God's Children to Distinction'. Their feedback through pupil conferencing helps the school to make improvements. They exercise their generosity by reaching out to others in the local community, such as Guide Dogs and Regenerate, as well as global charities such as CAFOD, and the link with their partner school in Uganda.
- Pupils have a genuine respect for those from different backgrounds. This is due to a growing understanding of different faiths, which they have studied and reflected on in RE. There is a real sense of belonging and respect for others, regardless of faith or none, and this is an outstanding aspect of this warm, inclusive school.

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- The links with the parish are strong. Pupils are involved in parish liturgies as servers or readers and the sacramental preparation programme is led from the parish with the school.

#### **b) How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education**

- The quality of pupils' learning and achievement requires improvement in order to become consistently good. Pupils come from a variety of faith backgrounds and practice. Most enter the school with levels of knowledge and understanding below expectation and many need, and receive, not only literacy, but also emotional and pastoral support. From their low starting points, they make good progress in the Early Years where the children have an excellent introduction to RE through story, prayer and reflection. By the end of Key Stage 1 there is good achievement but also some inconsistent progress as a result of weaker teaching.
- Progress through Key Stage 2 continues to be mixed, with good and better progress evident in the thoughtful and extended writing in last year's Year 5 and Year 6 books, but also evidence in the recent past and current work shows that not all pupils are challenged sufficiently, especially the more able. Careless presentation of written work in some classes indicates low teacher expectation, while some low-level behaviour impacts on learning.
- Other groups, such as those with SEN and disadvantaged pupils, make good, sometimes better, progress because of planned interventions and the proactive support of learning assistants. Sub levelling is used three times a year to secure accurate judgements on progress. Not all written tasks, however, are consistently differentiated to meet their learning needs.
- The pupils' ability to learn independently, and with others, is not yet fully developed because they are not always encouraged sufficiently to actively seek to improve their own knowledge. However, their ability to think spiritually and morally is secure, and most can make the connection between what one believes and how one acts.
- Their growing ability to understand and critically reflect on our faith story, and that of others, is evident in discussion, as well as their learning about other faiths, which they enjoy.

#### **c) How well pupils lead, respond to and participate in the Prayer Life of the School**

- All pupils, irrespective of faith background, participate fully, and feel included, in the prayer life of the school. They show reverence, attentiveness, and willingness to play their part. They are ready and eager to be more involved in the initiation, organising, and presentation of their liturgies and assemblies, not

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just being willing participants in adult-led collective worship. The class prayer books are beautifully presented with many examples of pupil involvement in planning class liturgies and reflections.

- Pupils have the example and role modelling of the Chaplaincy Team, with their high profile around the school. They are role models in leadership and taking the initiative, for example in running clubs exploring religious art, leading the rosary during May and October, and organising meditation in the school chapel.
- The pupils value the many prayer opportunities during the school day. They have a good, progressive knowledge of the traditional prayers and have some understanding of the ritual and prayer different from their own through their study of the other major faiths. They compose their own heartfelt prayers and reflections, displayed on the prayer tables and in the Class Worship books.
- The sacramental and liturgical life of the school is reflected in the assemblies, the class and whole school Masses, and the celebrations throughout the Church's liturgical year of the life of Jesus, and the saints. Through these, the pupils have developed a good understanding of the sacramental life of the Church.

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

**Grade 2**

### **a) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils**

- Leaders and governors very effectively promote, nurture and sustain the Catholic ethos of the school as their primary concern and care, and are able to articulate it and share this with the staff and parents.
- The governing body is a knowledgeable and practical influence in the Catholic life of the school. They meet all the statutory, canonical, and diocesan requirements fully. They are acquainted with and have reflected on the diocesan plan and how it can influence the school and this has been successfully carried through. They have together carried out a self-evaluation and produced an excellent, innovative Governing Body Vision for Catholic Education document, which is a working document with measurable objectives.
- Leaders and governors take advantage of diocesan training for themselves and the staff, for example, in leadership training, or New to Catholic Education courses.
- More robust and reliable processes of self-evaluation are ensuring that evaluation of Catholic life is becoming more accurate. There is frequent detailed

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monitoring by the Curriculum Committee, who, together with the headteacher, report to the full governing body. The school also asks parents, staff and pupils, through discussions and questionnaires, their views and suggestions for improvement. Governors are taken on learning walks specifically to assess the Catholic environment of the school corridors and classrooms, accompanied by members of the Chaplaincy Team.

- The new Chaplaincy Team for this year benefits significantly from the parish priest and governor guidance and support in their early steps to becoming real animators in the life of the school. This is much appreciated and followed through with growing impact and success.
- Provision for staff induction and in-service training in order to develop staff understanding and commitment to the Church's mission is good. Staff spirituality is well supported with staff taking time to pray together regularly. Links with the parish are strong and the parish priest, who is also a governor, is a supportive and welcome presence in the school. There is at least one Inset day annually devoted specifically to Catholic life and spirituality. An inspiring example of this was a day in February with Fr. Adrian Porter.
- Leaders are open to advice from outside agencies, including the diocese, and share a renewed determination to move the school forward in close and fruitful collaboration with the other Catholic schools in their partnership.

**b) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the curriculum for Religious Education and relationship education, and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils**

- Leaders and governors have not yet used the existing data and monitoring information fully and effectively to evaluate the school's performance in order to plan future improvements. This is an area which requires improvement and which the school recognises as a priority.
- Governors receive regular RE reports through the head teacher, but are not sufficiently questioning and challenging. Learning walks around the school, lesson observations, and book scrutinies do take place, but weaknesses and obstacles to learning are not always noted clearly enough and followed up. For example, the quality and impact of marking on progress over time, or the careless presentation of pupils' work, which compares unfavourably with the English books.
- The RE subject development plan needs to be more focussed on improving pupils' learning, and making sure that curriculum planning and design contributes to more effective teaching and learning.
- Unavoidable staff mobility and the continuing need to train and support teachers who are new to the school, and new to RE teaching, has been a continuing focus area for RE leadership, and this good support is leading to steady improvements.

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Teachers appreciate this practical guidance, through planning advice, but also through the modelling of good practice, and the presence in their lessons of a more experienced teacher. This is still work in progress but within the school there is the capacity to take on RE and make it solidly good and better.

## **How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?**

**Grade 2**

### **a) The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education**

- The quality of teaching in RE requires improvement. There are examples of good and better teaching, but also more teaching which does not promote purposeful learning, engagement, enjoyment and the best progress that the pupils are capable of making.
- Teaching Assistants are closely involved in planning lessons with the teacher, so that interventions have a positive effect on progress. On occasion, the less able pupils have the same whole class tasks without the much-needed differentiation.
- Teachers need to encourage more independent learning through challenging tasks, which better meet the pupil's individual abilities. The school is also aware of the constant need to encourage pupils to write more reflectively and at length. They could achieve this by looking at examples of levelled work to guide and inspire them.
- The school does not always clearly identify weaker areas where there is insufficient challenge in terms of questioning or lower expectations of pupils' written work and presentation. Where teachers have high expectations of pupils' presentation of work and intellectual effort, the pupils rise to the challenge and are able to contribute their own arguments and opinions in both discussion and reflective writing.
- Where teaching is less effective, opportunities are sometimes missed to challenge the pupils to write more creatively and reflectively on what they are learning, rather than simply re-telling stories or explanations. Where teachers' subject knowledge is insecure, they are unable to lead the pupils to explore concepts or stories such as the Bible account of Creation in any depth beyond the literal.
- The marking of pupils' work is often helpful in showing them how to improve, but not consistent in all classes. The impact on progress over time would be enhanced enormously by more challenging teacher comments, which elicit a more extended, thoughtful response from the pupils and requires real intellectual effort. There is a general lack of response to teachers' comments.
- Attainment data accurately measures and tracks progress, and is used successfully to enable less able pupils to make smaller steps, but it is not always



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used as effectively to meet all pupils' learning needs in the lessons or to inform teachers' lesson plans. Presentation of work in some years is careless and compares unfavourably with work in English. Greater attention needs to be placed on the learning challenge inherent in the lesson objective.

**b) The extent to which the Curriculum promotes pupils' learning**

- The curriculum does not always provide continuity and progression between key stages to ensure that pupils are able to make consistent progress. The syllabus needs more attention, especially to learning objectives, which engage and challenge all pupils in their learning. The schemes of work need to be interpreted with more creativity and imagination to infuse lesson planning, and create lessons that are memorable, relevant and challenging for all pupils.
- The RE curriculum meets all the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. It is broad and balanced so that students can explore and develop their own values and beliefs. They explore themes such as fairness, compassion and injustice, which they then link to the objects of their charity fundraising, and outreach to others in society who are more needy.
- The study of other world faiths, in lesson topics and in the One World Week, is given great importance in this inclusive school because it promotes tolerance, understanding, and respect for others, especially cultural and religious differences. Provision for sex and relationship education is in place and approved by the Curriculum Committee adhering to diocesan guidelines.
- The curriculum design promotes spiritual, moral and vocational development and is taught through the lens of the Faith. Pupils in Year 4 and above have the opportunity to go on retreats, and a group joined other Emmaus schools to visit a Hindu temple in London. A very fruitful retreat for the whole Emmaus cluster was held at Downside Abbey. The sacramental preparation programme for First Holy Communion is run in the parish in close collaboration with the school and the parish sponsors the Wednesday Word.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to exercise their care and concern for others through charities which they organise themselves.

**c) The quality of the Prayer life provided by the School**

- The prayer life provided by the school is outstanding. It is fully inclusive and joyful. Prayer punctuates the school day and is part of every celebration. The school chapel is at the heart of the school and is a wonderful, well-used focus and encouragement for so many children. The adjacent church is used frequently and many pupils serve and are involved in the parish Youth Masses, as well as the parish Mission.

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- Pupils experience the regular Masses and the celebration of the feasts in the Church's calendar, as well as the special seasons of Advent, Lent, Easter and Pentecost. There are also opportunities to learn the traditional Catholic devotions such as the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross. The prayer methods and styles used by the school are age appropriate. Children from other cultures are able to celebrate in their traditional way, such as the Filipino celebration
  - There are colourful and thought provoking displays around the school which remind the whole community of the liturgical cycle and the topics the pupils are currently studying. These are supportive of the school's vibrant Catholic life. They are attractive, and reinforce the mission and values of the school.
  - Parents and carers attend Mass and assemblies when they can, and the provision for the engagement of parents, local parishes and other faith communities is excellent. The school sends home Prayer Bags with the children to encourage and develop the spirituality of the whole family. These have been very successful, especially during Advent and Lent. The school's Prayer Life is closely monitored and evaluated and leads to action for improvement, closely overseen by the the lead teacher for RE, and the governing body.

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## Summary of Parental Questionnaires

All 78 returned parental questionnaires were every positive about the school and the quality of their children's education. Some typical responses included:

*'I love the way this school is open to other faiths and cultures. It promotes friendship, help, and an open mind'.*

*'It declares that they raise "God's children to distinction" and do not water down the "God" element. It is very evident that Jesus' love is conveyed and not just religious concepts detached from relationship with Him. This pervades all the other subjects and incorporated with sensitivity to other lifestyles'.*

*'Great values, family oriented. Lovely multi faith school. We are not Catholic but really like what is offered. Faith and its associated values are important and visible'.*

*'This school has a real family feel to it. As a parent, you feel listened to and valued, and children are given exceptional care and education. The beliefs and values that children are taught are evident in everyday school life. Parents have the opportunity to be involved in assemblies, class Masses and other celebrations of their child's learning'.*

*'The school is welcoming and family feel. It has an organised and structured approach to learning, and dedication to children's development on a spiritual, moral, and educational basis'.*

*'All of the children look after each other and live by high standards of behaviour. There is great respect for the individual'.*