



INSPECTION REPORT

St Peter's RC High School and Sixth Form Centre
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Headteacher: Mrs S Layhe
Chair of Governors: Mr I Cahill

**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: 25-26th January 2018
Date of previous inspection: 29-30th January 2013

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

Description of school

St Peter's Catholic High School and Sixth Form Centre is a larger than average sized 11-18 school. It draws pupils from a wide catchment area, including Gloucester, the Forest of Dean and Stroud. The school converted to academy status in 2011. The percentage of baptized Catholic pupils in the main school is 64% and 59% in the sixth form.

The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average, as is the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English. The number of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average. The proportion of pupils receiving support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in leadership, including two changes of headteacher. The current headteacher took up post in January 2017.

There have also been significant changes to the composition of the governing body since September 2017

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 2

This is a good school because:

- The new headteacher and reconstituted governing body share a commitment and determination to steer the school through the next phase of its development. Leaders and governors have a strong presence within the school and provide positive role models for both staff and pupils.
- The Catholic nature of the school is an integral part of its life, aptly captured in the phrase 'heartbeat of the school'.
- The Catholic life, including the pupils' contribution to it, is a huge strength of this outward looking, family orientated and inclusive school.
- Pupils are immensely proud of St Peter's and wholeheartedly embrace the many rich opportunities provided for all to grow in faith and secure a deep understanding of the importance of faith in their lives.
- The school's model of chaplaincy is highly effective in reaching and engaging a large number of pupils.
- Pupils' progress and attainment in religious education is good across the key stages, relative to their starting points and capabilities. They enjoy their learning in RE and are keen to improve their knowledge and understanding about the subject.
- The RE department's committed, specialist teachers have an infectious enthusiasm for their subject. The excellent relationships encouraged by teachers promote positive attitudes amongst pupils and a genuine enthusiasm for the subject
- The school is highly regarded by parents and has excellent links with the parishes.

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

- The school has a newly constituted governing body who are committed to providing support and challenge to school leaders. This group has already embarked on its own self-evaluation process, using the CES model. This, combined with more rigorous systems for observation, appraisal and assessment, introduced by the new headteacher, is proving effective in enabling governors and teachers of RE to focus more on the analysis of current pupils so that intervention can occur much earlier. The time is now ripe to grow and embed the systems which are in place, or being developed, to enable pupils to progress even further in RE and for the school's Catholic life to be formally monitored in order to build on and plan future improvements.
- There is a strong desire for, and commitment to, improvement in developing the school's Catholic life and standards in RE.
- All areas highlighted for development in the last inspection report have been effectively addressed. The new assessment system and programme is adhered to by all teachers and is proving effective and ensures consistency across the department in monitoring pupils' progress. Teachers are becoming more skilled in adapting work to pupils' needs and use technology in a variety of appropriate and interesting ways to enhance learning. The department has implemented the requirements of the New Curriculum Directory, using the 'People of God' scheme in KS3 and ensures that Sixth Form General RE and follow up work has clear links to it. They have also liaised with primary feeder schools.

What the school should do to improve further

- Governors should build on the outcomes of their recent self-evaluation and use this as a springboard to set up a rigorous system for monitoring, analysing and evaluating the impact of both the Catholic life of the school and RE, in order to build on and plan future improvements.
- The head of RE should embark upon a review of the RE SEF and development plan to ensure a clear flow and linkage between both documents. The key priorities emerging from the SEF should be clearly prioritised within the development plan and implemented, with appropriate targets, milestones and clear lines of accountability.

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

Grade 1

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

- The Catholic life, including the pupils' contribution to it, is a huge strength of this outward looking, family orientated and inclusive school. The recently introduced St Peter ROCK (Respect, Optimism, Community and Kindness) Award is valued by pupils and integrates the school's values with Catholic teachings of sacrifice and service as well as excellence in academic areas.
- Pupils are immensely proud of St Peter's and wholeheartedly embrace the many rich opportunities provided for all to grow in faith and secure a deep understanding of the importance of faith in their lives. They have a strong sense of personal worth and demonstrate tolerance and respect for others.
- Pupils speak with confidence and palpable enthusiasm about the school's distinctive Catholic nature and what it means to them. Whilst the school is proud of and celebrates its Catholic heritage, cultural diversity is both recognised and celebrated as a key feature of the school.
- The school's model of chaplaincy is highly effective in reaching and engaging a large number of pupils. Pupils respond positively to the chaplain's 'open door' approach, in which all are welcome, and the wealth of opportunities provided for them to develop and grow in their faith if they so wish.
- The highly regarded lay chaplain provides excellent leadership for both pupils and staff, acting as a fulcrum for the school's Catholic life. Consequently, a significant number of pupils are involved in shaping the school's mission and ethos.
- The chaplaincy's strong promotion of mission and social responsibility, based on Gospel values, has been highly effective in enabling pupils to gain confidence in expressing their own views and beliefs. Consequently, they are eager to take on responsibilities and play a part in developing the school's Catholic life.
- Pupils in years 7, 9 and 12 benefit from Retreat days run by the chaplain, in which they are provided with opportunities to reflect on their faith, the community of St Peter's and their role as global citizens. For example, the year 7 Retreat which focused on 'You are God's Work of Art' was a moving experience, ending with each pupil being anointed with 'special oil to strengthen them on their journey through school'.
- Pupils understand the importance of service and respond readily to the needs of others. The 'Charities Team' meet regularly to plan sessions and work together. They are actively involved in supporting their designated year group charity and as part of the harvest thanksgiving make a contribution to the Gloucester Foodbank, supporting the work of the city. The 'Charities Team' meet regularly to plan sessions and work together.
- Year 10 and Year 12 pupils' involvement in the the Diocesan/ CAFOD programme for Young Volunteers and Young Leaders has heightened their understanding of social justice and action, enabling them to become involved in developing, organising and running awareness and Fund raising events for CAFOD within the school community.

- Pupils value the opportunities provided to participate in the school's Eucharistic Ministers training Programme and the Altar Server Training which is carried out by pupils in Years 10 and 11 who, in turn, train younger pupils to serve at Mass.
- The school is rightly proud of what it describes as 'Chaplaincy on Tour' which enables pupils to engage in faith through attendance at many large gatherings e.g. attending the Flame Conferences at Wembley and the Big Church Night In events in Bath.
- In Year 7, pupils have the opportunity to attend 'Good Vibes', a lunchtime club that allows them to discover more about the Catholic faith, in a friendly and fun environment.

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

- Overall, pupils' progress and attainment in religious education is good across the key stages, relative to their starting points and capabilities. In 2017, however, unforeseen circumstances related to staffing had a negative impact on results at Key Stage 5, although GCSE results were still in line with national average.
- The good progress made by pupils is due in no small measure to the positive impact of effective and engaging teaching strategies on learning. Teachers are successful in motivating and engaging pupils to use religious language in a meaningful way, developing a good understanding of the implications of belief for everyday life.
- Pupils enjoy their learning in RE, are keen to improve their knowledge and understanding and respond enthusiastically to teacher questioning. They are confident in expressing opinions and explaining reasons for opposing standpoints. They have excellent relationships with their teachers and each other, and are keen to do well.
- Pupils demonstrate a genuine interest and curiosity in the subject and enjoy the opportunities provided to discuss and reflect on their learning, learn new concepts and explore other faiths.
- In particular, pupils respond positively to challenging activities, and respond well to opportunities to extend their learning
- Pupils are competent in using key religious vocabulary and, relative to their age and capacity, are religiously literate and engaged in their learning. They are able to use their knowledge and understanding of RE to think spiritually, ethically and theologically and most are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

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

- Pupils demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm and engagement in the prayer life of the school.
- They embrace the rich tapestry of opportunities offered to them through chaplaincy provision, RE, assemblies and in the tutor periods. However, pupils' experience of prayer in the morning tutor period is patchy at times, and a consistent approach to actively listening to prayers (such as the daily Angelus) is required if this is to remain as an important part of the 'school tradition'. Work is in progress to address this through monitoring by heads of year and support in leading prayer provided by the lay chaplain to ensure that 'all pupils experience the same opportunities'. This should remain an ongoing focus.
- Praying is seen as a natural and integral part of the school's life. Pupils (on a rotational basis) say prayers on the tannoy at the end of the school day, reflecting local, national or world events, and the liturgical year.

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- There is a culture of pupils asking the principal and chaplain to pray for a specific intention, and during the month of November numerous pupils place the names of those they have known and loved in the Holy Souls box.
 - All year groups have a patron saint and celebrate the life of their saint through their own liturgy, which is led by them. They play an active role through preparing readings, prayers, role-play and music. For example, Year 9 celebrated their Year Saint, St Agnes of Assisi in November and Year 10, St Francis Xavier in December. The latter focused on Francis as a Missionary saint, using this as an opportunity to celebrate the school's multicultural community.
 - Whole school Masses of over 1555 pupils take place in 'The Barn', at the start of the academic year, on holy days of obligation and the school's Feast Day. The school has been hugely successful in creating a climate where the celebration of Mass is a prayerful, inclusive and joyful experience for all (irrespective of their beliefs). All members of the school spoken to were, without exception, effusive in their praise of these as being respectful and prayerful occasions which all members of the community. They were described by many as 'having to be witnessed to be believed!'

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 demonstrate a deep commitment to the Catholic life of the school. Governors have a strong presence within the school, provide positive role models for staff and pupils and are supportive of different activities within the school. The Catholic nature of the school is ingrained in everyday life and is an integral part of its life, aptly captured in the phrase 'heartbeat of the school'. Its Catholic mission is a priority for all leaders and governors who ensure that all statutory and canonical responsibilities are met. Everything it does is in line with the Gospel message and underpins the whole work of the school.
- The school responds well to diocesan policies and initiatives and is currently engaged in promoting the Bishop's vision, applying the principles of 'A Future Full of Hope' to its life as a Catholic community. There are regular INSET opportunities to support and develop staff's understanding of the school's distinctive nature.
- Leaders and governors are kept abreast of developments in its Catholic life through the regular and comprehensive reports to strategic management meetings provided by the lay chaplain who is a member of the group. This, in turn, informs the headteacher's report to governors. In addition, governors have engaged in observing assemblies and, informally through attendance at religious events but these lack sufficient focus and rigour.
- Although governors have been involved in some aspects of monitoring, the newly established governing body recognises that this is an area for further development. In particular, there is a need for more robust systems for monitoring the school's Catholic life in order that there is clarity about strengths and areas for development and the impact for pupils. The recent changes to the governing body have resulted in governors providing more challenge. They have, for example, embarked on an annual self- evaluation using the CES (Catholic Education Service) form, which includes an overarching core area in relation to all aspects of the Catholic character of the school. This should be used as a springboard for ensuring well targeted planning and actions. This, combined with the recent changes implemented by the headteacher in relation to implementing a more rigorous approach to observation and appraisal systems, bodes well for the future. However, the impact of these new initiatives has still to be realised.
- Provision for the induction of all staff into the Catholic life of the school is excellent. The school's Catholic ethos is respected and embraced by all, irrespective of their beliefs.

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

- The RE curriculum meets Bishop Conference requirements, including the need to teach about other faiths and traditions. Leaders and governors ensure that RE is comparable to other core subjects, in relation to professional development, resourcing, staffing and accommodation.
- Governors maintain oversight of Religious Education through the Standards and Quality Committee, Mission and Ethos Committee and headteacher's reports. In addition, the link

governor for RE works closely with the department and keeps apprised of developments and issues arising.

- RE data on performance are analysed by the head of RE and shared with governors through the departmental SEF which also includes outcomes from lesson observations, work scrutiny and pupil interventions. In addition, there is a RE development plan highlighting priority tasks. Attention now needs to be given to ensuring a clear flow between these documents so that priorities emerge from the SEF and are clearly prioritised within the development plan, with appropriate targets, milestones and clear lines of accountability. Consideration should also be given to formally involving other members of the department in this process.
- The head of department, in collaboration with the link governor for RE and SLT line manager for the subject, engage in monitoring activities which include lesson observations, learning walks and departmental discussions. In addition, the head of RE monitors the department's work through book trawls. However, there is a lack of clarity among staff regarding how these different elements are formally integrated into the self-evaluation and planning process.
- In line with the introduction of a more rigorous observation and appraisal systems all members of the RE department are line-managed by a member of the senior leadership team. Again, the next stage is to determine how the outcomes of this contribute to the department's self-evaluation and planning.
- The new assessment system recently introduced by the headteacher (which makes more coherent links between targets, ongoing progress assessments and predicted grades) is embraced by the department and should, in due course, make a positive impact on student progress and outcomes.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 2

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

- The department consists of committed, specialist teachers who have an infectious enthusiasm for their subject. The excellent relationships encouraged by teachers promote positive attitudes amongst pupils and a genuine enthusiasm for the subject.
- The quality of teaching and purposeful learning within RE is typically good, with some outstanding features. Teachers are effective in promoting Catholic values, securing and celebrating achievement, developing high esteem and confidence in their pupils. They provide pupils with well-planned learning opportunities, which effectively prepare them for their future in a multi faith society.
- Overall, teaching enables pupils to make good progress because it engages their interest, provides challenge, and encourages them to think reflectively so that they themselves do the work and make the necessary intellectual effort. This was especially evident in the strong examples of analytical approaches in Year 7 and in A Level.
- Homework is regular, well planned and provides opportunities for detailed feedback. Opportunities to develop their competence as independent learners are provided through these well-planned homework tasks which are diligently tackled by all and make an important contribution to pupils' learning.
- Teachers are committed to bringing about improvement across all outcomes for pupils. However, a particular focus should be on improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational (SEN) and/or disabilities, making full use of the effective tracking, which is now in place. This will ensure that all groups make appropriate progress and interventions put in place at an early stage. Attention should also be given to improving outcomes for students at Key Stage 5.
- The new assessment system is adhered to by all teachers and is proving effective in ensuring consistency across the department when monitoring pupils' progress.
- Teachers give generously of their time to organise revision sessions at lunchtime and after school and place a strong emphasis on links with parents, contacting home to celebrate progress and effort as well as to inform parents when there are issues.

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

- The RE curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and at each key stage. It provides continuity and progression within and between key stages, ensuring that most pupils are able to make appropriate progress. Other faiths are effectively explored in the schemes of work.
- The head of RE and his team are well-qualified specialists who are committed to the teaching and promotion of the subject, which leads to learning which is often stimulating and memorable. Excellent support is provided for those teachers who are not Catholic and their response to this is exceptionally positive.
- Relationship and sex education is coherently planned and consistent with the teaching of the Church and recent diocesan guidelines (April 2017).

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- Attendance at Diocesan training ensures that the head of RE is up to date with curriculum developments. Resources are well managed, and ICT, art and music particularly are used imaginatively to colour and enrich the learning experience.
 - The colourful artwork and displays reinforce learning in RE topics and visibly declare the Catholic ethos of the school. Resources to support teaching, and to enliven and enrich the schemes of work, are good. The curriculum makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils and is enhanced by the school's rich chaplaincy provision.
 - Although the whole school curriculum provides opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development within a range of subjects, this could be strengthened further by heads of departments engaging in a formal mapping of provision across the board.

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

- Provision for prayer life is a real strength of the school. It is a natural and integral part of its life and punctuates the school day. Prayer and collective worship are given a high priority in terms of planning and resourcing.
- The school chaplain plays a pivotal role in supporting staff in planning prayer for assemblies and tutor periods. In addition, she very effectively meets the spiritual needs of the pupils, be it through assemblies and liturgies, retreats or events such as the Flame Conferences at Wembley, Big church nights in Bath or IGNITE evenings.
- Facilities are provided for pupils with different beliefs to practise their faith during key festivals or holy days.
- Links between school and parish are strong, with the previous parish priest of Our Lady's Churchdown making a significant contribution to the development of the school's prayer life over a twelve-year period. The Mustard Seed First Communion Programme, run by the chaplain to prepare pupils for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion, and pupils preparing for Confirmation in their parishes, are actively supported within school.
- There are regular opportunities to participate in whole school Masses on holy days of obligation and the school's Feast Day. These are prayerful, inclusive and joyful experiences for all (irrespective of their beliefs).

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 93 parental questionnaires received. The majority were extremely positive about the school. However, some parents requested more information about what is taught in RE and relationship education and being kept informed about their child's progress in RE. A small minority considered that the school did not seek their views or take account of suggestions or concerns.

Some typical responses included:

'My children look forward to getting involved in Masses which they see as a special occasion for the whole school to get together and celebrate the values of the school'

'The chaplaincy team help children get excited and involved in the Catholic faith'

'The ethos of the school is tangible everywhere'

The school really does make time for both liturgy and learning'

'All the children are valued and nurtured'

'The Holy Spirit is everywhere at St Peter's'

'The school actively encourages pupils to become well-rounded human beings who value themselves and each other'