



INSPECTION REPORT

St Pius X Catholic Primary School
Gatehouse Avenue, Bristol BS13 9AB
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URN: 109252

Interim Headteacher: Mr A Moore-Stow
Chair of Governors: Mr P Harper

**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: 11-12 January 2017
Date of previous inspection: 4 February 2013

Reporting Inspector: Mrs A Barrett

Description of school

St Pius X is a smaller-than-average primary school which serves the parish of St Pius X. The percentage of Catholics is 21% with 21% from other Christian denominations and 2% Muslim and Sikh. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is slightly above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need or an education, health and care plan is average. The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above average.

The school has experienced an extremely turbulent period since 2012 with no substantive Catholic headteacher in place since then, alongside significant issues in relation to staff retention. The governing body has kept the Catholic vision and ethos alive during this time.

From 2014 the school has been led by five interim head teachers and has only recently benefited from a full time Catholic RE co-ordinator. In March 2016, the school was placed in the category of 'serious weaknesses' by Ofsted on the basis of historically poor outcomes, with the other areas deemed 'requiring improvement'.

Since October 2015, the school has been led by an experienced interim headteacher who became executive headteacher of both St Pius X, and another Catholic primary, in January 2017. The school's assistant head teacher became head of school in September 2017. Neither the interim executive headteacher nor the head of school are Catholic.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 3

- In spite of the school's extremely turbulent and challenging period, there is a real sense of green shoots and growth at this stage in the school's journey, which bodes well for the future.
- This is a welcoming and inclusive school where all are valued and are committed to working together as a Christian community 'centred on the Gospel teachings of Christ.'
- Pupils have a real sense of pride in their school, are extremely well behaved, polite and welcoming. Inspectors were touched by their honesty, openness, thirst for learning in RE and their commitment to the school's Catholic ethos.
- The school is well regarded by parents and has excellent links with the parish.
- The governing body has been, and is, the driving force behind the development of the school's Catholic ethos. Recent changes to governance have strengthened this further, and are helping to underpin developments in ethos and RE.
- The newly formed governing body, consisting of skilled Catholic professionals and led by a highly experienced chair and vice-chair, need time to implement and consolidate these changes.
- The school's experienced interim executive head teacher and the head of school are committed to improving their own knowledge and understanding of the school's distinctive nature.

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- Pupils make slow progress in RE, with the majority below age-related expectations. This is due to a legacy of underachievement, which is now being addressed.
 - Overall, the quality of teaching requires improvement, with elements of good.
 - Opportunities for pupils to fully participate in the Catholic life of the school are at an early stage but are developing with the support and direction provided by the newly formed governing body and leadership team.
 - Opportunities for pupils to respond to and participate in the school's prayer life are underdeveloped but improving.
 - The newly appointed RE co-ordinator is beginning to improve standards in both RE and the school's prayer life.
 - Staff, in turn, share governors' vision and commitment to improvement throughout the school.
 - The school has strong links with the diocese and is fully committed to following diocesan guidelines and advice.

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

- The school benefits hugely from the newly constituted governing body, which shares a common understanding of what constitutes a good Catholic school. It has established clear strategies to address the lack of Catholic leadership and is working towards providing long term stability in this and other areas. The time is now ripe to grow and embed the systems which are now in place to enable this to happen.
- Governors now have a clear vision for the school, which is understood by all. There is a palpable desire for, and commitment to, improvement in developing the school's Catholic life and standards in RE.
- The school's experienced interim executive headteacher and head of school very much share the governors' clear vision for the Catholic life of the school and RE. They are committed to improving their own knowledge and understanding of the school's distinctive nature and Catholic leadership.
- The school's RE coordinator shares the vision and commitment of governors and leaders and is playing an important part in implementing this vision using his specialist skills and knowledge.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school, in order to accelerate pupils' progress, to enable them to achieve age related expectations or above, by:
 - improving teachers' specialist knowledge of RE by providing ongoing training and support both in-house and through attendance at diocesan courses.

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- improving teachers understanding of what constitutes a learning objective, as opposed to a task, so that they can appropriately move pupils on in their learning. ensuring that learning objectives are sufficiently challenging for more able pupils and build on prior knowledge in order to deepen understanding so that they become leaders in their own learning.
 - ensuring that low attaining pupils are provided with appropriate scaffolding tasks to enable them to move progressively towards a stronger understanding and greater independence in the learning process.
 - Establish and embed robust systems and processes to enable leaders and governors to monitor, evaluate the impact of actions taken to promote Catholic life and religious education.
 - Continue to grow and develop chaplaincy across the school and provide well planned opportunities for most pupils to organise and lead meaningful acts of prayer and worship.

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

Grade 3

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

- Opportunities to participate in the Catholic life of the school are at an early stage. Pupils are beginning to develop an informed understanding of what it is to be part of a Catholic school and are eager to take on responsibilities and play a part in developing its Catholic life when these opportunities are offered.
- Pupils are well behaved, polite, respectful and immensely proud of their school, speaking openly about the significant improvement in behaviour in recent years. Supportive relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Pupils' appreciate their teachers and feel valued by them.
- Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to their 'school family' and are proud to be part of it. They appreciate the school's emphasis on values, which are clearly stated in its mission statement. When asked about the meaning of 'success with faith' in the mission statement one pupil, immediately retorted that 'it means to be successful with Jesus on your back'. Another pupil beautifully described the school distinctive nature as 'A place where meek souls collaborate and pray'
- Pupils are beginning to understand the importance of service and they respond readily to the needs of others. They enthusiastically participate in fundraising efforts, with regular contributions to the local foodbank and almost £200 raised for CAFOD through a non-uniform day and cake sale during Harvest.
- The school's strong culture of compassion and care plays an important part in moulding and developing pupils' respect and compassion for others.

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- In lessons and discussions, most pupils demonstrate a good understanding of right and wrong and understand the need to say “sorry” when necessary. Leaders seek to ensure that this is consistently applied in all areas, especially during informal times on the playground, reinforcing this in Friday assembly through making a link to a Gospel value.
 - Most pupils are aware of the importance of key celebrations in school throughout the liturgical year and in the parish community. Members of the parish have commented on the children’s impeccable behaviour during Masses.
 - Pupils respect that people have different faiths and enjoy asking questions about others’ beliefs.
 - Year 5 and 6 classes enjoy participating in collaborative activities provided by other Catholic schools in the Aquinas group, such as the Year 5 Sports Day where they acquired points for teamwork as well as for actual results. All spoke enthusiastically about these opportunities.
 - Chaplaincy is in the early stages of development, but firm plans are in hand for the small team to develop and grow and to take on more responsibilities for planning, leading and developing the prayer life of the school. The school has valued and greatly benefited from the opportunity to participate in joint events with the Aquinas cluster.

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

- Pupils make slow progress in RE, with the majority below age related expectations. This is due to a legacy of underachievement, which is now being addressed. The sustained lack of a stable teaching staff, specialist RE input and Catholic headteacher have greatly militated against raising standards in RE over the years.
- However, the raised profile of the subject, in conjunction with a more stable staff, good governance and committed leadership, is beginning to accelerate progress overall.
- Pupils have good attitudes and want to do their best, applying themselves and working at a good pace when provided with appropriate tasks and guidance. However, the limitations of some tasks do not always allow pupils to demonstrate what they are capable of, or enable them to respond in a way which encourages them to use religious language and make links between faith and life.
- Across the school there is an increasing sense of purpose about learning in religious education, with pupils responding well to the praise and rewards they receive for good effort. Pupils are keen to share their views when asked and have a genuine engagement with the subject.

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

- Opportunities to respond to and participate in the school’s prayer life are underdeveloped but are beginning to grow under the leadership of the recently appointed RE coordinator. Pupils, irrespective of faith background, value these

opportunities and readily participate in the routine prayer life of the school, demonstrating respect and reverence during individual and collective prayer.

- Most are confident in saying traditional prayers and are beginning to experiment with different prayer styles. This will strengthen when staff, in turn, become more confident in providing opportunities for them to develop spiritually.
- The school benefits hugely from its strong links with the parish. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their regular visits to the church and feel they are valued members of that community. The parish priest visits the school weekly, engaging with the pupils and talking to them over lunch, and often leading whole school assemblies.
- Pupils contribute to writing the Bidding Prayers in Mass and act out the Gospel readings but have little influence in organising or leading acts of prayer and worship or in reviewing the school's provision for prayer. Involvement in these will, as the school rightly affirms enable their children to 'become a bigger voice' in the school when promoting the Catholic ethos.
- Year 5/6 pupils valued the recent opportunity to participate in a residential Advent Retreat to Kintbury. This was highly effective in enabling pupils, regardless of their beliefs, to join in with a range of faith-based activities and prayer. This coupled with opportunities to participate in nativity and Easter walks at a local Christian centre, where pupils are 'taken back in time' and see the events first hand with actors and a narrator are highly regarded by all. The school should seek to build on these enriching opportunities
- The sacramental and liturgical life of the church is woven into assemblies and whole school Masses ensuring that all have a basic understanding of the key seasons and festivals. However, many lack confidence in making links between these and scripture, and this must be addressed in RE alongside developing their understanding of the sacramental life of the church.

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

Grade 3

- 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 unequivocal support for the Catholic life of the school, but their involvement in monitoring, evaluating and shaping this has been limited to date due to the school's turbulent history. However, their self-evaluation is refreshingly honest and incisive, clearly highlighting areas of strength and weakness and

what needs to be done to improve. This now need to be implemented in a planned and incremental way, ensuring that governors and leaders are fully involved in the process.

- The newly constituted governing body and leadership team have been highly effective in supporting the drive to improve the Catholic life of the school and tackle the legacy of underachievement in RE. They are working closely with the newly appointed RE coordinator to bring this to fruition. This bodes well for the future, and strong green shoots of change are already evident.
- Governors are now making a significant contribution to the leadership of the Catholic life of the school by challenging and supporting the senior leadership team and this will improve further when the role of the link governor is fully embedded.
- The Bishops' Conference requirements for the time allocated to RE are fulfilled and the RE co-ordinator is Catholic.
- Governors have tried to ameliorate the lack of Catholic leadership through investing in training at all levels. For example, the head of school is participating in the diocesan Aspiring Leaders programme which focuses on leading a Catholic school; the specialist RE coordinator is a regular attendee at diocesan and cluster meetings for RE and has carried out lesson observations and book scrutinies with the diocesan director; all staff attended a day on spiritual well-being at Emmaus House, Bristol which included a formal session on the order and significance of Mass for new staff. Another INSET day is planned for the summer term.
- Staff training must remain an ongoing focus so that the staff's awareness and understanding of the Catholic nature of the school is developed further. In addition, leaders and governors should continue to develop their own understanding of diocesan guidelines and documents in order to fully implement them.

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 school is in the very early stages of using data and monitoring information in order to evaluate its performance in RE and improve outcomes for pupils. This is now a key focus for the newly appointed RE coordinator who will lead this process and share outcomes with leaders and governors. Firm plans are in hand for the new RE link governor to engage in joint lesson observation, work scrutinies and learning walks.
- The new RE coordinator has made a significant impact in a short period and provides an excellent role model for teachers. He works effectively with them to help develop resources and adapt the God Matters RE scheme to meet the needs of their class. The next stage is to set up an ongoing programme of training for all, including appropriate induction for those who are new to teaching in a Catholic school.

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

- The recent significant improvement in behaviour, combined with the raised profile in RE, has created a 'can do' culture amongst both staff and pupils, but leaders and governors recognise that there is still a considerable way to go to improve standards across the board.
- Overall, teaching requires improvement because, in the past, the sustained lack of a stable teaching staff and specialist RE lead has greatly militated against raising standards in RE. The lack of an appropriate RE curriculum and teachers' insufficient subject knowledge have prevented pupils from developing religious literacy and an ability to use religious language in a meaningful way.
- However, teaching is improving and there are now elements of good within it. In the better lessons, planning was accurately linked with pupils' prior learning and sufficiently differentiated to consolidate and build on their learning. These lessons were also characterised by well planned activities which encouraged pupils to think for themselves and develop as independent learners.
- The sustained lack of a stable teaching staff and specialist RE lead has greatly militated against raising standards in RE. The lack of an appropriate RE curriculum and teachers' insufficient subject knowledge have prevented pupils from developing religious literacy and an ability to use religious language in a meaningful way.
- Teachers are keen to improve their subject knowledge and value the support of the RE co-ordinator in this. Particular attention should be paid to the difference between a learning objective as opposed to a task and, in turn, providing tasks which enable learning objectives to be achieved. Attention should also be given to providing more challenging tasks for the more able and more scaffolded tasks for low achievers.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed by teachers, know the children well and make a positive impact in supporting their learning.
- Sound systems for assessment are now in place which support pupils' learning. However, this, alongside the school's systems to record and monitor pupils' progress, is still at an early stage of development. Further improvement could be made by sharing attainment levels with children so that they are clear about the progress they are making.
- Pupils' work is regularly marked and teachers are diligent in correcting errors and providing written feedback. However, at times, pupils' responses to teacher comments are inaccurate or not completed and not followed up by the teacher.

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

- The RE curriculum follows the God Matters programme and meets the Bishops Conference requirements. As with other areas this is very much a work in progress with the RE coordinator working closely with governors and leaders to enrich and develop provision, focusing on curriculum design and teaching and learning. This includes collaborative planning with staff, network meetings with other Catholic schools and attendance at relevant diocesan INSET.
- Provision for sex and relationship education is in place and approved by the governors, adhering to diocesan guidelines with effective links with science and personal, social and health education.
- Enrichment activities such as the Year 5/6 residential trip to Kintbury and other residential visits have a positive impact on children's self-esteem, develop teamwork and provide opportunities for their moral, spiritual and vocational development.
- Cross-curricular links are still under developed, although progress has been made in linking English. There is a clear focus on celebrating differences through celebrations of other cultures as part of 'other faith' weeks and Black History Month. Children respond positively to these opportunities and 'are able to identify that we are all made in God's image and we should love our neighbour'.

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

- Prayer is an important part of the life of the school and follows a structure of regular class based acts of worship and whole school assemblies. There are opportunities to pray daily at the start and end of the day and to say grace at lunchtime. Leaders are aware that this area should be developed further, with more planned opportunities for encouraging pupils' leadership.
- Key seasons and feasts of the Church's year are celebrated through Mass and assemblies. Masses in the adjacent parish church and the community Christmas services are well attended by parents and other members of the local community. Parents interviewed commented on the importance of these events for them and on their pride in the excellent behaviour and joyful singing of their children at Mass.
- Pupils have a sound understanding of the Church's year, with all staff committed to developing this understanding further. Displays around the school and reflection areas in classrooms and the entrance foyer remind the school community of the liturgical year and reinforce classroom learning.
- There are some opportunities to experiment with different types of worship in class, with whole school assemblies using outside speakers, including representatives from CAFOD, to provide a greater variety of forms of prayer with effective use being made of drama and creative art activities to engage pupils.
- Staff accept responsibility for leading prayer and involving pupils in its delivery, but monitoring of the school's prayer life is informal.

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- Spiritual, moral and vocational development provision is strong, with pupils being encouraged to live out the school's Christian values.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 29 parental questionnaires received and were overwhelmingly positive about the school. A small number of parents requested being kept informed about their child's progress in RE.

Some typical responses included:

'The ethos of the school puts children's needs first'

'It is a good Catholic school and has clear values'

'I love it that my children are able to go to Mass, pray and speak freely about Jesus'

'If schools like this were not available, then I would home school my child'

'I love this school – my children have been well loved and looked after. I am so glad that we found this place'

'My child struggled at her last school and she has improved so much since she has come here'

'Everyone at St Pius welcomes you and the door is always open to talk to someone about your concerns'

'Staff have always been caring, supportive, respectful and understanding'

'The teachers get to know each one individually and cater for each one's needs. They have clear rules for our children to follow and my children are so happy here'