



INSPECTION REPORT

St Pius X Catholic Primary school

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Interim Head Teacher: Mrs D Fannin

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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**

Date of inspection: 6th/7th February 2020
Date of previous inspection: 11th/12th January 2017

Lead Inspector: Mrs A Barrett
Additional Inspector: Miss R E McLoughlin

Description of school

St Pius X is a smaller-than-average Catholic primary school which serves the parishes of St Pius X, Withywood. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 8.6%, with 10.5% from other Christian denominations and 5.7% from other faiths. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith. There has been a significant drop in the number of Catholic pupils since the last inspection.

The proportion of pupils who have a SEN statement or an educational health and care plan is below the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those speaking English as an additional language is below the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium is well above the national average.

Since the last diocesan inspection, the school was placed in special measures following an Ofsted inspection in June 2018. A special measures monitoring visit took place in October 2018 and concluded that the leaders and managers were taking effective measures towards the removal of special measures. The governing body was replaced by an Interim Executive Board (IEB). The current interim headteacher took up post in September 2018 having been previously appointed as head of school in September 2017. An interim deputy took up post in October 2018. Both are fully committed to the school's Catholicity and being fully involved with the diocese. A new RE part-time lead was appointed in September 2019 following the departure of the previous RE lead.

It is important to note that there has been a significant turnover in staff and governance since the last inspection. In terms of leadership, the only constant factor has been the headteacher (previously head of school) and chair of governors.

The school benefits greatly from the support provided by the diocese and is part of the Aquinas Catholic Partnership.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 3

- Pupils have a strong sense of pride in their school, feel safe and well cared for, and enjoy coming to school.
- Pupils, irrespective of background feel welcome to participate in the school's prayer life, demonstrating respect and reverence during class prayer and assemblies.
- There is a clear sense of community at all levels which is evident in the quality of relationships that exist between adults and pupils in this welcoming, supportive, inclusive community.
- The school continues to benefit from its strong links with the parish.
- Clear policies and structures are in place which provide high levels of pastoral care to all pupils. There is an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable and those in need, in both policy and practice.
- The behaviour of pupils is good almost all of the time, but a small minority can sometimes lack an appreciation of the uniqueness of others and are insensitive to their needs within the wider community. However, effective strategies are in place to address this.
- Whilst some pupils make progress relative to their starting points and capabilities, there are many who do not.

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- Teachers are enthusiastic and highly motivated individuals. However, due to lack of training, many have insufficient subject knowledge and expertise in RE and as a consequence lack an informed understanding of how pupils learn in the subject.
 - The high staff turnover and use of supply staff has had a negative impact on pupils' progress in RE and the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from its Catholic and prayer life.
 - Leaders and the IEB are committed to the school's Catholic and prayer life and the teaching of RE. However, the focus on moving the school out of special measures has meant that the promotion, monitoring and evaluation of these aspects has been relegated and they have not been given the attention they deserve.
 - The new curriculum part-time leader for RE provides invaluable support for her colleagues. However, the school acknowledges that the part-time nature of the post is unsatisfactory, compounded by the significant staff turnover and the need to provide on-going training and support for teachers in RE.

The capacity of the school community to improve requires improvement

Leaders' and governors' main focus has been on addressing the priorities from the Ofsted inspection. Consequently, they have not engaged in systematic monitoring and evaluation of the provision for religious education, nor the school's Catholic and prayer life, to enable them to effectively plan and implement improvements to outcomes for pupils.

In addition, the areas for development highlighted in the previous inspection remain on-going, especially given the significant staff turnover since the last inspection and the need to provide ongoing training and support for teachers. Chaplaincy, however, has continued to grow and develop but is restricted to a small number of pupils.

The school recognises that too much responsibility has been delegated to the RE lead, and plans are now in hand to address this. The intention is to set up a RE team to support the RE lead in the implementation of these plans. This bodes well for the future but must be implemented as a matter of priority.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish a new collaborative staff team to share responsibilities in developing the school's RE and Catholic Life. This team should be overseen by the RE leader and include the headteacher.
- Improve the quality of teaching across the school, in order to accelerate pupils' progress, to enable them to achieve age-related expectations or above.
- Continue to strive to improve teachers' specialist knowledge of RE by providing ongoing training and support both in-house and through attendance at diocesan courses.
- Update the RE/Catholic life action plan in the light of this inspection and integrate it into the school's Raising of Attainment Plan (RAP). This will ensure that the priorities for the school's Catholic, prayer life and RE are regularly reviewed by the IEB, alongside the Ofsted priorities.

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

- Pupils have a strong sense of pride in their school, feel safe and well cared for and enjoy coming to school. One Y5 pupil summed it up when he said 'I love this school.... I am really happy here'. Although many struggled to articulate what belonging to a Catholic community involves, they demonstrated that they are alert to the needs of others (both within and beyond the school) and are willing to support those who are less fortunate.
- Pupils respond positively to the opportunities provided to participate in the Catholic life and mission of the school. They enjoy participating in whole school fund-raising charities, such as contributing to the local foodbank, fundraising for CAFOD through non-uniform days and cake sales during Harvest, and participating in Odd Socks Day to raise awareness of bullying. The chaplaincy team, in particular, take a lead in collecting for the foodbank.
- Opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school's Catholic character are as yet underdeveloped. Consequently, they are only infrequently and passively involved in this process. The small chaplaincy team does, however, engage in reviewing 'prayer corners' and RE displays. Consideration should be given to providing opportunities for pupils to engage, for example, in reviewing the mission and values statement and conducting audits on how the school reflects its Catholicity in the visible signs around the building.
- Pupils in Year 5 benefit greatly from the Advent residential retreats at Kintbury where they are provided with opportunities, regardless of their beliefs, to engage in a range of faith-based activities and prayer. In the 2019 Advent retreat, the school had the added benefit of being paired with a Lasallian school in Malta through which they enhanced their understanding of another culture.
- Chaplaincy has grown since the last inspection but still remains an area for development. Whilst some pupils value the school's provision for chaplaincy, only a minority participate in it. The school's small Y5 chaplaincy team has a high profile across the school but this is limited to leading the school in saying the opening prayer at the start of each whole school assembly and helping to promoting charity events. The school has valued and greatly benefited from the opportunity to participate in joint chaplaincy events with the Aquinas Catholic Partnership. These excellent opportunities should be extended to a much larger group of children.
- The behaviour of pupils is good almost all of the time. A small minority can sometimes lack an appreciation of the uniqueness of others and are insensitive to their needs within the wider community. However, effective strategies are in place to address this.
- Pupils and staff respond positively to those opportunities for each class to help plan the whole school Masses in the church and consequently are growing in confidence as a result of this, supported by an effective parish priest.

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- Pupils value the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development which enables them to be happy and confident individuals.

b) The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The school's mission statement reflects the educational mission of the Church. However, whilst most staff are aware of the statement, the high turnover of staff has meant that it lacks ownership and there is no clear sense that it underpins all that they do. The mission statement therefore needs to be reviewed and developed so that all who are involved with St Pius understand it and the impact it should have on all aspects of school life. This should involve exploring and articulating how the school's mission and vision links to other key policies such as behaviour, RSE, PSHE and SMSC, permeating each and every aspect of school life.
- The school endeavours to create a climate of mutual respect for each other as well as for oneself. This is expressed in its mission and values statement, behaviour policy, programmes to develop pupils' personal relationships (RSE) and PSHE.
- There is a clear sense of community at all levels which is evident in the quality of relationships that exist between adults and pupils in this welcoming, supportive, inclusive community. Staff promote good standards of behaviour, and they are good role models of mutual respect and forgiveness for pupils.
- Supportive relationships between staff and pupils remain a strength of the school. Pupils appreciate their teachers and feel valued by them.
- The school environment reflects its Catholic identity and ethos through some obvious signs of the school's Catholic character. These include religious artefacts in key areas across the school, alongside displays celebrating chaplaincy and retreat experiences, with the school motto 'Success with Faith' prominently displayed in the inner lobby for all to see. The recent completion of a beautiful prayer garden is to be commended. In addition, RE displays and prayer tables are prominent in all classrooms, although the quality of the latter is variable. Consideration should be given to creating a school chapel utilising one of the spare classrooms with a 'pop up chapel'.
- Clear policies and structures are in place which provide high levels of pastoral care to all pupils. There is an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable and those in need, in both policy and practice. The Pastoral Support Manager makes a significant contribute to pupils' welfare and is a highly valued member of the school community. She works in liaison with the leadership team and all staff, to ensure that the pastoral needs of individuals are met. The Nurture Room provides a welcome environment for all and is highly valued by parents.
- The school promotes good standards of behaviour that reflect Gospel values and develops positive relationships between all its members. Consequently, relationships between staff and staff and pupils are good overall.
- Staff are committed to the Catholic life of the school but opportunities to participate in staff retreats and prayer are limited apart from the INSET day with partner Catholic schools. New staff have, however, created a staff prayer, which is a strong

indication of their commitment to being members of this Catholic school community.

- The quality of care shown to all members of the community, both pupils and staff, is a huge strength of the school and is to be commended. Parents sought out inspectors to praise the support that they receive for both their children and indeed themselves. One summed it up by saying 'I adore this place.... people need it so badly. They have been brilliant in helping me with my son and he is now coming to school'. Another said 'I have really struggled with my son and they have really helped me. I couldn't have managed without this place'. 'The head and the pastoral support manager are always there for me - the teachers all work so hard for us. I couldn't do without them'.
- Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), and Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) are planned to reflect Catholic teachings and principles. The school is in the process of updating these programmes so that they are in line with the new diocesan and DfE guidance. Care should be taken to ensure that sufficient time is planned into this so that parents are consulted, and staff are trained in using new resources.
- The extent to which spiritual and moral development is informed by Catholic Social teaching is limited and is an area for development.
- The school has a strong regard for the pastoral needs of staff and has a range of initiatives to support these, including a Well Being Team.
- The provision for chaplaincy has slightly improved since the last inspection but still remains an area for ongoing development so that more pupils are involved in the process. The small team are a visible presence and have set up their own chaplaincy notice board.
- All staff have an awareness of the importance of promoting Catholic education and of supporting children on their faith journey. However, they need significant support and training in articulating and implementing this. Everyone is giving of their best but given that so many staff are new to the school, time needs to be set aside to review the mission statement so that everyone is clear about it and shares in its vision.
- One INSET day each year is set aside to support the teaching of RE or for developing spirituality. This is done in liaison with other schools in the Catholic Partnership and is valued by all.

c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- Leaders and the IEB support and are committed to the Catholic life of the school but focus on moving the school out of special measures has meant that the promotion, monitoring and evaluation of this aspect has been relegated and has not been given the attention it deserves. Consequently, the drive for school improvement has had a limited impact on developing its Catholic life. This needs to be rectified as a matter of priority and systems for reporting to the IEB should be established.

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- Although the provision for the Catholic life of the school is acknowledged in the school's self-evaluation, it is not always clearly reflected. Consequently, drive for school improvement has a limited impact on its Catholic life.
 - The chair of the IEB (who is also the link RE/Catholic life governor) is a regular visitor to the school. As a long standing and experienced governor, she has a good understanding of the issues which the school needs to address in relation to its Catholic character and she works in tandem with the headteacher and RE lead. She affirms that the agenda for the IEB must reinstate a standing item on the school's Catholic life, RE and prayer life.
 - There is no development plan for the school's Catholic life. Such a plan would need to have clear milestones and action points, which would need to be agreed by leaders and governors and shared with staff. There are currently no formal systems in place for leaders to report to governors on a regular basis to enable them to make strategic decisions about the Catholic life of the school.
 - Leaders and governors need to ensure that the whole curriculum contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, and vocational development in a planned and systematic way rather than in an ad hoc way as at the present
 - The Bishop's vision for the diocese is implemented by leaders and governors. Key staff and governors participate in diocesan initiatives and attend relevant training and conferences. However, this, as with SMSC, needs to be woven into the whole school curriculum and effectively monitored and evaluated.
 - The school has effective strategies for engaging parents, especially in relation to the pastoral dimension. They do exceptionally well in successfully reaching those who might traditionally find working with the school difficult. However, not all parents are clear about the school's distinctive nature.
 - Collaboration with other Catholic partner schools in the Aquinas Catholic Partnership has gone from strength to strength and is greatly valued by all for the opportunities it provides to enable joint working on common issues.

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

- Most pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and KS1 make progress relative to their starting points and capabilities. However, by the end of KS2, pupils' progress is significantly hampered due to their lack of knowledge and understanding of RE. This is due, in turn, to teachers' lack of opportunities to access training in theological and subject knowledge and is exacerbated by the high staff turnover and use of supply staff. Consequently, pupils' religious literacy is underdeveloped. However, the school's Catholic ethos, especially the strong link with the parish, plays a notable part in supporting the development of pupils' religious literacy.
- In KS2, in particular, there is limited evidence of pupils building on and learning from prior learning. As a result of this, pupils' ability to reflect on religious issues and the demands of religious commitment in everyday life is limited.
- In KS1 pupils approach their learning with interest and enthusiasm, but this is less so in KS2 in which too much time is spent in recapping and repeating KS1 work. As a result, pupils' motivation to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills as learners is impaired. In these lessons, behaviour is varied, and disruptions sometimes take place.
- Overall, pupils say that they enjoy their learning in RE, with a Y6 boy keen to share 'How much I have grown in RE'. In particular they value learning from the Bible, especially when it includes more creative activities such as art and drama. However, discussions with them highlight a variation in the range of quality activities they experience, with very few opportunities to explore or learn from religion. Pupils lack confidence in explaining their progress in the subject because of the limited guidance they receive on how to do this.
- There is a lack of opportunities for enrichment in and outside of the classroom. Pupils would greatly benefit, for example, from visiting other places of worship or working with children from other Catholic schools. When offered these, they are highly appreciative. For example, the chaplaincy team benefited from their involvement with other schools in their Catholic partnership, including working with students from the Catholic sixth form college. These opportunities are, however, restricted to a very small number of pupils.

b) The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- Teachers are enthusiastic and highly motivated individuals who have a genuine desire to develop and improve in their theological understanding and knowledge of RE, Catholic life and prayer life. However, due to lack of training, many have insufficient subject knowledge and expertise in RE and lack an informed understanding of how pupils learn in the subject. Consequently, teaching requires improvement because it is not always linked to pupils' prior learning so that it builds and extends learning for all.

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- Teachers are (with the support of the RE lead, staff meetings and guidance provided by diocesan RE resources) making progress in planning age-related and sequenced lessons. However, this is very much in the early stages. More time, however, needs to be set aside by leaders and governors to ensure that a systematic training programme is established within school in order to address this. Consequently, as highlighted above, many pupils in KS2 do not learn well enough in relation to their starting points.
 - Teachers are now much clearer in identifying a learning objective (LO) separate to a task or activity but now need to use the school's feedback and marking systems to give pupils more focus in their learning. This, in turn, will enable pupils to understand their progress in the subject and what they need to do in order to improve.
 - Pupils' understanding of key religious concepts is underdeveloped, with limited opportunities to write in depth or to engage in challenging activities which extend their learning in RE.
 - There is an over-reliance on re-telling in RE at KS2, with limited opportunities for pupils to develop an informed understanding of key religious concepts and to reflect spiritually and ethically on the importance of faith in action and on Catholic Social Teaching (CST). Opportunities for pupils to write in depth, especially in relation to AT2 (engage, respond and learn from religion) is also an area for improvement.
 - The school is aware of current diocesan developments in relation to the teaching of RE and assessment. However, the accuracy, consistency and rigour of tracking pupils' progress is not fit for purpose.

c) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. The school follows the approved diocesan programme and ensures that the teaching of other faiths is an integral part of this.
- The decision to move one lesson a week to being taught in the morning has been effective in raising the profile of the subject. This should in time, alongside effective teacher training in RE, have a positive impact on outcomes for learners.
- The new curriculum leader for RE is passionate about the teaching of RE and provides valued support for her colleagues. She is a committed, qualified specialist who is building on the work of her predecessor and gives generously of her time outside her working days to attend RE training and subject meetings. The school acknowledges that the part-time nature of the post is unsatisfactory, compounded by the significant staff turnover and the need to provide ongoing training and support for teachers. It is imperative that, funding permitting, the RE lead is reinstated as a full-time appointment so that she can effectively fulfil this demanding role.
- The school recognises that too much responsibility has been delegated to the RE co-ordinator and plans are now in hand to address this. The intention is to set up a RE

team to support her in the implementation of this. This bodes well for the future but must be implemented as a matter of priority.

- The provision for staff training has improved since the last inspection with, for example, all NQTs attending relevant diocesan training and the Catholic partnership cluster meetings for RE. The new curriculum leader for RE has embarked upon the Diocesan three-day modular training and attends RE meetings with partner Catholic schools. The new RE lead is endeavouring to model the good practice of the previous lead by working with teachers to adapt the new diocesan RE resources to the needs of each class. This, as highlighted above, has proved challenging given the part time nature of her post.
- There is an appropriate action plan in place for RE, but it stands in isolation from the Raising Attainment Action Plan (RAP) which highlights the priorities from the Ofsted inspection. The RE action plan should be updated, in the light of this inspection, and integrated into the RAP. This will ensure that the priorities for the school's Catholic, prayer life and RE are regularly reviewed by the IEB alongside Ofsted priorities.
- Staff training must remain an ongoing focus so that 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 the Bishops' Vision. There is currently no forum on the IEB agenda to address this. This must be rectified as a matter of priority.
- The headteacher, in liaison with the RE lead, is involved in some monitoring of teaching and learning in the subject. However, the outcomes of this process are not formally documented or reported to the IEB, thereby limiting the effectiveness of governors in planning improvement for provision in RE. The chair of governors (who is also the link for RE and Catholic life) recognises that too much is dependent on her informal visits, which tend to be Ofsted driven.
- Leaders and governors need to ensure that teachers are provided with a range of stimulating and engaging resources in RE. This, alongside teachers' use of a wide range of teaching strategies, will make a significant impact on engaging and motivating pupils.

a) How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's prayer life

- Pupils, irrespective of background, feel welcome to participate in the school's prayer life, demonstrating respect and reverence during class prayer and assemblies. Opportunities to respond to and participate in the school's prayer life have slightly improved since the last inspection but this still remains an area for development.
- Praying together is a daily experience for all. The majority of pupils are confident in saying traditional prayers, readily participating in prayers at the start and end of the day and in the lunchtime Grace. However, opportunities for pupils to prepare or lead prayer in assembly tend to be superficial and are restricted to the small chaplaincy team. This, in turn, does not effectively engage pupils creatively and is over reliant on the adults in the school.
- There are now good opportunities in place for each class to take responsibility for planning Mass with the guidance of the parish priest. The new teachers interviewed, who have no experience of Catholic education, spoke highly of this experience, describing it as 'Scary at first but it really helped us feel part of the school community'. They also commented on how the children 'love Mass'.
- Pupils are aware of the church's liturgical year, but they have a limited appreciation of the significance of this for planning appropriate worship. This has been identified by the school as an area for development.

b) The quality of the prayer life provided by the school

- The school continues to benefit greatly from its strong links with the parish, and pupils are regular visitors to the parish church, which is adjacent to the school. Pupils relish their visits to the church for Mass, where they feel valued and welcome members of that community. Members of the parish have commented on the children's impeccable behaviour during Mass. The parish priest is a respected member of the school community, visiting weekly, talking to pupils at lunch times and supporting and encouraging staff.
- There are regular opportunities to participate in Mass, including whole school Masses at the beginning and end of term and at key liturgical times as well the diocesan school leavers Mass.
- The school works hard to engage parents and carers. Masses are well attended by parents, especially seasonal events such as Christmas carol concerts, Nativity and Easter services.
- The school has an established tradition of Year 5 attending Advent retreats at St Cassian's at Kintbury. This is highly effective in enabling pupils, regardless of their beliefs, to join in with a range of faith-based activities and prayer. The 2019 retreat proved to be especially enriching as the school was paired with a Lasallian school in Malta, enabling them to learn about another culture. The school should seek to build on these enriching activities which play an important part in pupils' spiritual

and moral development and should extend these opportunities to other year groups.

- Whilst acts of prayer and collective worship are planned and resourced, this aspect of the school's life has been given lesser priority since the school was placed in special measures by Ofsted. In addition, the high turnover of staff has negatively impacted on the school's quality of provision of its prayer life. However, the RE lead has plans in place to address this, in liaison with the chaplain from an outstanding secondary partner school.
- Although staff accept responsibility for leading prayer and aim to involve pupils in its delivery, little time is spent on innovation and encouraging pupils' leadership. Staff understanding of the purpose and variety of prayer and collective worship is, understandably, limited due to their lack of training in this area. This should be addressed as a matter of priority.
- Displays in and around school are supportive of the school's Catholic life but more use could be made of the excellent outdoor facilities to develop this further, inspired by the recent inspirational development of the prayer garden.

c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the prayer life of the school

- Leaders show limited understanding of how to plan and deliver prayer and collective worship and should seek support from the diocesan or Aquinas partnership in addressing this.
- The headteacher and other leaders are effective in planning and leading assemblies, but leading quality prayer and collective worship is recognised as an area for development. They have a superficial understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts and as a result prayer and worship are not always accessible to pupils in a contemporary, pupil-centred context.
- There have been limited opportunities for staff to engage in liturgical formation and the planning and leading of collective worship. The formal monitoring and evaluation of prayer and collective worship by leaders and governors requires improvement.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 24 parental questionnaires received. Some typical responses included:

'The head and the pastoral support manager are always there for me-the teachers all work so hard for us. I couldn't do without them'.

'Although we are not a religious family, I think that it is important that children are taught good values and morals and St Pius X teaches these things well'

'As a small school St Pius has a really supportive family and community feel'

'Warm welcome, staff support is outstanding'

'Lovely school, happy, for all my children'

'The teachers are amazing'

'Because I think it is God's place'

'It is a small school and my son seems to be doing really well'

'The Masses are really good, and the priest is really friendly'

'Because it is a Catholic school and we are a Catholic family'

It is a lovely school. I feel that my children are safe while there. There are very good teachers'