

## DIOCESAN MONITORING VISIT



School:	St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Farnborough
Executive Headteacher:	Paula Dix
Head of School:	Anne Mulholland
Chair of Governors:	Ged Owens
RE Leader:	Alexis Pinto de Almeida
Date of the Visit:	23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2018
Visit carried out by:	Robert Dare and Maggie Sanderson
Date of last Validation:	June 2015
Number of pupils on roll:	213
Percentage of Catholic pupils:	80.3%
Percentage of Catholic staff:	66.7%

### Activities Carried Out as Part of the Visit

- Discussion on the school's self-evaluation sheets.
- Observations of a key stage one worship.
- Joint observations of teaching and learning in RE in 3 classes.
- Discussion with a representative group of pupils.
- Joint RE work scrutiny.
- Discussion on assessment.

### Background

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School was last validated in June 2015. Schools receive a s48 validation once every five years and the normal practice is that approximately halfway through this period schools receive a diocesan monitoring visit. A monitoring visit is completed by a diocesan officer and all monitoring activities are carried out jointly with members of the school leadership team. Findings are agreed between the diocesan officer and the school. On this occasion the diocesan officer was accompanied by a diocesan headteacher who is currently training to be a s48 validator.

Since the last validation, the headteacher has taken on an executive headteacher role, covering both St Patrick's and the other Catholic primary in Farnborough, St Bernadette's. The deputies in both schools are now designated as head of school. The two schools maintain separate governing bodies.

### Key Findings

#### **Self-Evaluation**

The school regularly reviews their diocesan self-evaluation sheets consulting with staff and governors. The most recent review was carried out this term. The sheets are comprehensive, well written and identify the key strengths within each section and highlight the areas the school has decided to focus upon. The sheets as a whole give a clear picture of the school and provide many examples of how the work of the school impacts positively on the school community.

The self-evaluation sheet for Section D: Leadership and management, would benefit from a fresh look. In reviewing this area the school has primarily focussed on leadership and management of RE and the work of the RE leader, these comments are better placed in Section B3: Leadership and management of religious education. In Section D the focus needs to be on the activities and impact of the leadership of the school, particularly the senior leadership team and the governing body, on the Catholic life of the school.

The school has taken a cautious approach to deciding on its judgements and is currently judging itself good overall and good in each of the 8 specific areas. Halfway through the validation cycle this gives the school a

strong springboard to move forward and a solid base to build upon. From the evidence seen during this visit, the school is at least good in all areas and in some are already moving towards outstanding.

The school is always looking for opportunities to improve its practice and the self-review document lists the following as key areas it wishes to focus upon:

- Continue to develop the school's induction procedures for new members of staff.
- Continue to develop the expertise of the newly appointed RE leader.
- Assessment and tracking in RE.
- Continue to develop the children's involvement in planning and leading worships across the school.
- Encourage further use of the Cafod resources and website to support RE.

### **School Community and Environment**

Throughout the school there is firm evidence that you are within a community of faith. Particularly strong examples include:

- **The centrality of the mission statement, *'With Christ as our guide and example, we celebrate the uniqueness of the individual. Together we will try to: learn from Jesus, love like Jesus and live like Jesus'* in the life of the school and the community.**

The children, and adults, spoken to and observed during the visit take this message very much to heart. The children were able to talk confidently about how the school mission statement helps to steer them in the right direction. The sense of family and community is a major strength of the school. In September, each class revisits the mission statement and using it as a basis agree a class charter for the year, this helps to keep the statement fresh and retain a high profile in the school.

Feedback from regular parental surveys show they greatly value the school's Catholic ethos.

The school took the decision to run the Breakfast and After School clubs themselves in order to ensure the school's Catholic ethos is a consistent presence for the children in the school.

- **The warmth of the welcome received by visitors and by members of the school community.** From the moment you step across the threshold you are made to feel welcome, and as you travel through the school, both adults and children are polite, friendly and welcoming. The school has a good induction process for all who join the school community, particularly the teaching staff, but the leadership team feel this needs to be strengthened further to ensure any concerns are identified earlier and appropriate support put in place.
- **The care given to ensuring the school environment is maintained to a very high standard and reflects the school's Catholic ethos.**

As you enter into the school you are greeted by a number of signs and artefacts that very clearly illustrate you are in a Catholic school. Throughout the school, high quality religious displays and artefacts are constantly visible so you are always aware you are in a faith setting. Opportunities are embraced to celebrate the diverse cultural background of the school and the many gifts and talents of the children. A recent Community Week celebrated the increasing number of children joining the school from other countries and cultures. This is reflected in a prominent display in a central corridor.

The school is situated in well maintained and attractive grounds. These include a prayer garden, which the children helped to design, and a set of mosaic Stations of the Cross, again the children were able to contribute to the design, and also helped in their physical creation with every member of the community adding at least one mosaic tile. These are used to great

effect during Holy Week when all classes walk from station to station reflecting on Christ's journey to the cross.

▪ **The very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils.**

During the visit, the children were consistently polite, well-mannered and well behaved. In class, they demonstrated very good learning behaviours, were attentive and listened to each other with respect. Children take on a number of voluntary roles within the school, enabling them to use their gifts and talents in a true spirit of discipleship. Children's achievements are recognised each week during the Friday Celebration Assembly. Achievements are also celebrated in the school newsletter. Pupils value the school's Catholic ethos, recognising it provides them with guidance on how to act, they were able to talk about how the school mission statement, and Jesus telling us to 'love our neighbour' helps them understand why we need to reach out and help others with compassion and charity. Fund-raising includes supporting a range of charities, for example, Cafod and Children in Need, and also includes causes with a more personal link to the school, for example, the drive to raise funds as part of Epilepsy Awareness Day.

Pupils are encouraged to influence the school's development through the school council. Each class has a special book in which they write down their suggestions to be taken to the council for discussion and consideration.

▪ **The commitment to working with and supporting the wider Catholic school community.**

In addition to the readiness with which the school stepped up to support its fellow Catholic school in Farnborough, the staff and whole community are embracing the opportunities being generated by the creation of the Mother Teresa Partnership. This includes designing a logo, helping write a hymn for Mother Teresa, and writing a set of prayers for the new partnership.

The school is also proactive in the local Catholic RE cluster.

### **Religious Education**

There is evidence of a strong commitment amongst staff to the importance and central place of RE in the life of the school. Over the course of the day a number of activities were undertaken linked to RE, including a learning walk which included visits to three year groups where RE was being taught.

All classrooms had RE working walls which were being used well to support learning in the subject, particularly in Year 2. All RE lessons being taught during the learning walk contained good features, some individual lessons had elements of outstanding practice. Examples of good and better practice from across the school included:

- the creation of an atmosphere in which children felt safe to respond to a range of questions knowing their opinion was valued by both staff and their peers;
- high expectations;
- enthusiasm for the subject – children were engaged and motivated;
- very good subject knowledge demonstrated by the children and teachers;
- high quality questioning which extended learning;
- opportunities for pupils to discuss with each other the learning they are undertaking, and to justify their decisions and reasoning;
- range of activities to support learning in RE, including appropriate use of IT and adult support;
- care taken to make activities relevant to the children being taught;
- the emphasis on RE within the lesson;
- children making links with scripture and prior work;
- good use made of key religious vocabulary by the children;
- children making choices on the next steps in their learning;
- the use of RE working walls;

- the respect between individuals;
- the very good behaviour and class management
- high quality learning environments.

Areas for development that were seen included:

- ensure the balance of the lesson is focussed on the key RE learning.
- ensure activities are sufficiently challenging, particularly for the more able.
- avoid the use of worksheets which limit the potential response from the children, particularly the more able.

Work in the pupils' RE books are linked with the relevant level descriptors and are clearly focussed on religious education. An examination of a selection of the pupils' books showed the following strengths:

- A clear progress in RE skills and knowledge across the school.
- A variety of activities are offered to help pupils unpick and understand key pieces of scripture.
- The books clearly show RE is a valued subject in the school.
- Presentation is of a good standard, it is clear children take a pride in their books.
- The use of 'orange' questions to help children deepen their learning and apply it to their own lives. However, more often than not, these were posed at the end of the lesson or as part of the marking. Thought should be given to challenging the children with these questions at an earlier point in the lesson when they have more time to respond to them in depth, or if it is a question asked of the majority making it a focus for a subsequent lesson.
- The use of class Big Books to capture additional evidence.
- By the time the children leave the school they are capable of producing work in RE that is of a good or better standard.

In planning RE, the staff access all the diocesan material available to them and use it well to plan the learning journey through the topic. More RE now takes place in the morning reflecting the high profile the subject enjoys. The school has worked hard on developing a robust form of assessment in RE and were able to share how it can help inform next steps in learning in RE.

When pupils were asked about RE, they all said they liked and enjoyed the subject and that the teachers made sure they really understood the scripture being studied and also made it fun! They all talked enthusiastically about work in their RE books and could share examples where they felt challenged.

The school's RE governor supports the school through carrying out a number of monitoring activities, including taking part in an ethos walk and talking to the children about RE. She has also organised and led retreat days for both Y6 pupils and the staff.

The leadership team are committed to ensuring teaching and learning in RE is given a high priority and that it is continually improving. Together with the RE leader they provide very good leadership of the subject and support staff well.

### **Collective Worship**

Worship takes place daily, if there is not a whole school or key stage worship then prayer takes place in the classroom. The week begins with a Gospel Assembly where the message of the Sunday Gospel is explored and reflected upon. Children take away a key action and this is referred back to in the Friday Celebration Assembly. When worship takes place in the classroom this is normally led by the classteacher, often with support by the children. There has been a recent move to handing the planning and leading of class worship to the pupils, particularly in the older classes, this is something the school is keen to develop further.

Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced by a number of key features, including a spiritually rich environment, opportunities for 'awe and wonder' and good support from the parish priest. All classrooms have good quality prayer tables which contain a minimum of a cross, the Bible and a cloth relevant to the liturgical season.

Through its prayer life the school leads the community through the liturgical year. Recent liturgies have included a special Mass, with Bishop Philip, to celebrate St. Patrick's Feast Day, a journey around the school grounds pausing and reflecting at each of the Stations of the Cross, and a special Crowning of Our Lady service in May. Parents and members of the parish community are regularly invited to Masses at the school and to share collective worship with different classes. Reconciliation services are held in Advent, Lent and the summer term. Children are invited to attend the popular Rosary Club each week. Retreats have been offered for Year 6 and for staff.

Each class has its own prayer bag containing a number of items to support worship in the home. All children have the opportunity to take a prayer bag home, on a rota basis, if they wish. Families write a prayer together on a prayer leaf which is then added to the Prayer Tree just outside the school hall.

During the visit a class worship was observed. The children were prayerful, reverent and engaged. A spiritual atmosphere was created and maintained. The liturgy had a clear focus and message and all those participating were encouraged to reflect and participate. A key feature of the worship, and of the school, is the practice whereby children use their hands to 'offer' their response rather than the usual 'hands up'. This helps to both create and maintain the spiritual atmosphere of the worship.

As a result of the above, all the pupils in the school, both Catholic and non-Catholics, are able to experience a rich and varied range of opportunities to worship and give praise to God.

### **Future Actions**

As stated on the opening page, the school has already identified a number of appropriate targets to work on. **In addition**, the school should consider the following:

- Develop the use of the 'orange' questions, which are designed to deepen learning, by posing them at a more appropriate part of the lesson or giving over a whole lesson for the children to tackle them.
- Review the use of worksheets to make sure, if used, they consistently stimulate learning and not inadvertently put a ceiling upon it, for example, by limiting opportunities for a more detailed response or sustained writing.

Thank you for a very enjoyable visit.



Robert Dare  
School Support Officer

---

cc. Executive Headteacher  
Head of School  
Chair of Governors  
Diocesan Director for Education  
Diocesan Schools Commissioner and Professional Adviser to the Episcopal Vicar for Education