

Diocese of Hallam

INSPECTION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
(Section 23 of the 1996 School Inspections Act)

**St. Patrick's Catholic Primary School
Barnsley Road
Sheffield
S5 0QF**

Inspection Date: 17th and 18th March 2003

Diocesan Inspector: Mrs M. C. Johnson

The inspection of the denominational character of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School was carried out under the direction of the Governors of the school in fulfilment of their obligations under the requirements of Canon Law (ref.804,806), Section 23 of the 1996 Inspection Act, Section 13 of the Education (Schools) Act 1992 and Sections 241 and 259 of the Education Act, 1993. This inspection was conducted according to the Handbook for the Inspection of Religious Education in the Diocese of Hallam

The process of Inspection in the Diocese of Hallam has been developed to support and encourage each school community. It is hoped that this report will celebrate all that is positive and praiseworthy in St Patrick's Catholic Primary School and help promote sound development for the future.

A copy of this report may be obtained from the Governors of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Barnsley Road, Sheffield, S5 0QF or from the Diocese of Hallam Schools' Department, The Hallam Pastoral Centre, St Charles Street, Sheffield S9 3WU

INTRODUCTION

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Name of School	St. Patrick's Catholic Primary School
Type	Nursery, Infant and Junior
Status	Voluntary Aided
Number on Roll	331
Age Range	3 – 11 Years
Gender of Pupils	Mixed
Chairman of Governors	Mrs G Brown
Headteacher	Mrs P Battams
Address	Barnsley Road Sheffield S5 0QF
Telephone Number	0114 2456183
Date of Inspection	March 17 th and 18 th 2003.
Diocesan Inspector	Mrs M C Johnson

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School is located approximately four miles north of the city of Sheffield and serves a large area of mixed private and council housing including Firth Park, parts of Ecclesfield, Southey, Shiregreen and Wincobank estates – the catchment area of St Patrick's Church.

The school was opened in 1927 and initially served the local Catholic community as a primary and secondary school, also as a place of worship until the church was built in 1939. Over the years the buildings have benefited from many alterations. The school has a large playground and uses the parish field beside the school as a playing field. The parish church is adjacent to the school.

The class size groupings are:

Nursery	52	(29% Catholic)
Reception	40	
Year 1	40	
Year 2	40	
Year 3	41	
Year 4	40	
Year 5	39	
Year 6	39	
Total	279	(53% Catholic not including nursery)

PART ONE

ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

1. THE MISSION OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Patrick's Mission Statement which leads all documentation places Christ and His teaching at the centre of School life through the practice of Gospel values, recognition of the uniqueness of each individual and its aim to provide a Christ centred environment which enables each child to reach his or her full potential. This is a lived reality in the life of the school.
- 1.2 Thirty two questionnaires were returned by parents and with one exception were very positive and supportive of the school. They express great satisfaction with the teaching of religious education and appreciate the information sent out about the term's religious education programme, also the Headteacher's weekly bulletins. Some parents said that the information sent out stimulated family discussions at home and that they would welcome more information in order to extend these discussions with their children. Parents appreciate the support and care given to their children and the happy Christian environment in which they are encouraged to work hard and care for one another. Parents also expressed their appreciation for the care shown to themselves and their families, particularly in times of need.
- 1.3 Relationships throughout the school are good. All staff, both teaching and non teaching, care for and co-operate with one another. The children feel valued and secure in a calm purposeful working atmosphere.
- 1.4 The school prospectus which was recently revised is a good comprehensive document firmly rooted in the ethos and Christian values of the school.
- 1.5 There is a strong link between parents, parish and school and a very proactive group "The Friends of St Patrick's" organises social events to provide funding for equipment and improvements to the school environment.
- 1.6 The Parish Priest who has only been in the Parish for six months is a great source of strength and support and is highly regarded by children, staff, parents and governors. He attends liturgies in the school and has said class masses as a celebration of the children's work. He also attended a staff meeting on liturgy to which he was invited.
- 1.7 Sacramental preparation until this year was school based but has now become parish based with support from the school through the staff and religious education programme.
- 1.8 The school has a strong commitment to the poor and their New Covenant with the poor is displayed prominently in the school alongside the mission statement, and also in the school brochure. Some of the charities supported are the St Vincent de Paul Society, Mission Together, The Diocesan Caring Service and CAFOD.

1.9 The school accepts disabled children and has the facilities to provide for them. There is a lift and also a toilet for the disabled. Until recent times these facilities were used for a child but there are no wheelchair bound children in the school at present.

2. THE SCHOOL AS A WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

2.1 Collective worship at St Patrick's school meets statutory requirements and is celebrated daily in the classroom or in the hall as a key stage or whole school assembly.

2.2 During the inspection three acts of collective worship were observed, a whole school liturgy for St Patrick's Day, a year 3/4 class liturgy and an upper KS2 liturgy for Peace.

2.3 Parents, Parishioners and the Parish Priest were invited to the whole school liturgy to celebrate St Patrick's Day and this was well attended. The children entered quietly to the music and were obviously familiar with their positions for whole school liturgies. The older children sat around the focal point which was very appropriate and tastefully arranged by the children during the assembly. The younger children were seated on the platform enabling all children to participate fully. The assembly was introduced by the Headteacher but then led by the children who read the story of St Patrick. The whole school sang and prayed reverently together. There was a celebration of Irish dancing by younger children followed by the concluding prayer, appropriate readings and prayers to which the whole school responded. The parish priest gave a blessing and the children left in an orderly manner, after a very joyful, reverent and informative community celebration.

2.4 The year 3/4 class liturgy took place in the classroom. Parents of the children had been invited and a small group attended. The aim was to understand the term Journey in Faith and was well developed by discussing the Lenten Journey on which the class had embarked – prayers written by the children on footstep shapes were read out and placed around the focal point which was attractively arranged. Good use was made of the "Footprints in the Sand" which was interspersed with choruses of "Come with me", also of the poem "The River". Children then discussed where the journey was leading and the journey which Jesus took for us. The children entered fully into the liturgy and their prayers showed sensitivity and depth of thought. They also showed respect and empathy for the thoughts and prayers of others.

2.5 A peace liturgy held to coincide with the debate in Parliament on the Iraq situation was observed by the inspector. This involved the upper Key Stage 2 children and was attended by the parish priest. The music and tone of the assembly was very calm and peaceful. The focal point was a large world map with a large candle beside it. The children were each given a small ball of clay to hold in their hand and told to hold this as God holds each individual in the palm of His hand. Spontaneous prayers were said by most of the children and these enabled them to express their own concerns and worries. The clay was then made into a candle holder by each child who lit a small candle which they placed into the holder to surround the world map. This was a very calm, spiritual and prayerful assembly with appropriate music which allowed the children the opportunity to bring their own worries and anxieties to God in the

company of their friends. Children were then allowed to take home the candles as a special reminder of the Peace of God's presence in our lives.

- 2.6 Worship certainly plays a large part in the lives of the children at St Patrick's School and is a great strength of the school. Prayer observed in lessons and children's books was of the appropriate standard for their age and is showing development as children move through the school. This is good practice and helps the children to develop a personal relationship with God.
- 2.7 The more formal prayers of the church are also taught at the appropriate stages in the child's development.
- 2.8 A planner is used to keep a record of masses, liturgies, themes, leaders and prayers for each year group and each year the school's worship provision is evaluated to consider whether it meets the needs of all pupils and whether they are developing in their liturgical understanding.
- 2.9 The school has a good policy for worship and prayer which is reviewed and monitored by the Religious Education Co-ordinator each year and by the whole staff and governors every two years.

3 SPIRITUAL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Spiritual Development

- 3.1a The spiritual and moral development of the children at St Patrick's is a strength of the school and clearly contributes to the happy caring environment which it provides.
- 3.1b A warm friendly but purposeful atmosphere which is rooted in gospel values prevails throughout the school. Parents spoke of how their children are valued and taught to value and respect others.
- 3.1c The children are encouraged to develop an awareness of God in their own lives and of the beauty of his creation through prayer, reflection, well planned liturgies and assemblies, music, art, poetry, visits, care for one another, and also for those less fortunate.
- 3.1d The children have their own personal prayer journals which contain their own private thoughts, prayers and feelings. These books are not monitored or marked but the inspector was permitted by the children to see three of these books from KS2 "providing the contents remained confidential". The thoughts and prayers expressed illustrated a natural close relationship with God whom they love and trust implicitly.
- 3.1e All classes have a Religious Education focus which is used as a central point for prayer. These areas were usually attractive with a selection of artefacts relating to the topics and some of children's thoughts and prayers mounted around them.
- 3.1f There were very good displays of children's work and prayers mounted in the entrance where an attractive Lenten display had been built up providing an area for the children to spend a little time in private prayer and where they could hang their

Lenten promise books on a large tree. Displays in the school hall and around the school illustrated the spirituality of the children and the depth of their care and concern for those less fortunate.

3.2 Moral Development

- 3.2a The school has a Behaviour Policy which is based on a partnership between pupil, home and school centred on Christian belief in Gospel values of love and care for each other. It is based on Positive Behaviour strategies with discipline structures and sanctions to be used if required. It is a good clear policy which covers all aspects of behaviour management.
- 3.2b Strategies include a “Helpline Box” in the entrance to the school into which children can place a note about themselves or others they think are being bullied. The box is checked daily by staff and any possible serious incidents reported to the teacher and headteacher. This acts as deterrent and also provides security for more timid children. However, throughout the time of the inspection the inspector witnessed no evidence of bullying but many incidents of children caring for one another, working and playing happily together.
- 3.2c A Playground Buddies Scheme has been set up in the school; the role of the Buddy (Y6 children) is to provide support for any child who is feeling insecure, afraid or unhappy due to being left out of playground activities or home anxieties. This is a good system and works well encouraging the older children to be responsible by observing and caring for the younger ones. The children like this scheme and it was also highly praised by parents.
- 3.2d All behaviour witnessed in the classrooms was of a very high standard. Children feel valued by their teachers who respect them and they in turn respect and care for one another displaying kindness and concern, listening to the views of others with empathy and understanding.

PART TWO

CURRICULUM – RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

4 STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

4.1 Attainment and Progress

- 4.1a Curriculum time devoted to Religious Education is well planned and fulfils the requirements of the Bishops’ Conference.
- 4.1b All twelve classes were observed during the inspection.
- 4.1c Attainment throughout the school is good in most classes. Children are attentive and interested in their Religious Education lessons, which they enjoy. They participate fully in discussions and show good recall of previous learning together with a

deepening knowledge and understanding of the issues raised by the themes of the Religious Education programme.

4.1d Some of the written work in the children's books is very good in both key stages. It is well presented and well written, even in the early years and where expectations are high, a high standard is achieved. A consistent agreed approach to work in Religious Education books would achieve this same standard throughout the school according to children's ages and abilities.

4.1e The work samples provided for the inspector were taken from all classes in the school and showed a clear steady development in knowledge, understanding and spirituality as the children progress through the school.

4.2 **Attitudes to learning**

4.2a Attitudes to learning are very good throughout the school. Positive attitudes and the knowledge that they are personally valued and must care for and value others are taught and encouraged from when the children first enter school. The good level of support from parents has a marked influence on the positive attitudes and good achievements of the children.

4.2b The children like taking part in assemblies and enjoy the short periods for reflection built into most lessons and assemblies.

5 **QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROVIDED**

5.1 **Teaching**

5.1a Across the school there is some teaching of a very high standard and none is less than satisfactory. Some excellent lessons were observed at both foundation stage and KS2.

5.1b In the best lessons planning was good, individual lesson plans were tightly focused and had clear objectives which were explained by the teacher at the beginning of the lesson and where necessary referred to during the lesson and returned to at the end. There was a good balance of pace with time built in for quiet reflection, teacher input and discussion. The children were on task, affirmed by teachers and encouraged to share ideas which they did willingly whilst showing respect for the views of others. There were high expectations of the children, and suitable resources were ready to hand, there was also a variety of appropriately differentiated activities to suit all children.

5.1c Planning for both long and short term is done in teams at each key stage. Staff share ideas which brings a greater breadth and depth to individual plans. This is good practice.

5.1d Multicultural education is developed through the Here I Am programme and speakers or groups from other faiths are invited into school to share their culture with the children. The children, at both key stages, spoke of how much they enjoyed these visits and of some of the things they had learned about other faiths and cultures.

5.2 Religious Education Curriculum and Assessment

- 5.2a At the present time St Patrick's School has a Religious Education Policy Statement which it is intended to develop into a complete policy after the inspection. When this review takes place the policy should also incorporate sections on Spiritual and Moral development.
- 5.2b The school benefits from a very hard working and conscientious Religious Education Co-ordinator who attends all Diocesan Religious Education Co-ordinator meetings and gives feedback to staff at their regular staff meetings. She finds the co-ordinators meetings very useful for her work in school and enjoys the sharing of ideas and planning sessions.
- 5.2c Here I Am is used throughout the school and the staff all use the Diocesan planning sheets which they appreciate and find useful. Planning is of a very good standard.
- 5.2d The staff plan together in teams sharing ideas and ensuring that the topics are well developed at each level. The overall planning is then monitored by the Religious Education Co-ordinator.
- 5.2e Children review their topics using the Diocesan sheets "What I know now" with the younger children whilst the older KS2 children write theirs as simple reviews. This is good practice.
- 5.2f Teachers in the foundation stage discuss with the children what they remember of the topic and assist them to fill in the balloons, which is appropriate for children of this age.
- 5.2g Assessment of children's work takes place throughout the school and the children have special books for this purpose. The 'Levels of Attainment' sheets are used, also assessment of individual pieces of work. This is good practice. However the number of times assessment takes place is variable and this needs to be addressed at a staff meeting.
- 5.2h A further aspect of the assessment of children's work which needs to be checked is where parallel or mixed age classes are involved to ensure that the standards used are the same for each year group as there were slight variations observed during the inspection.
- 5.2i Reports to parents are based on the child's achievements in 'Here I Am' Topics of knowledge, attitudes, values and sensitivity gained, together with a comment from the teacher and are very comprehensive providing a total picture of the years' work and achievement.
- 5.2j The school recently completed the Diocesan self evaluation document which is very honest, realistic and practical and gives a good clear picture of the school. It is a useful tool for future development.

- 5.2k Marking of children's work is very positive throughout the school and this encourages the children to take a pride in their work.
- 5.2l The Religious Education Co-ordinator has carried out detailed audits of planning, Religious Education Work in the classrooms and marking which are all very useful tools to stimulate and inform staff discussion and will assist further progress. This is a very good practice.

6 MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

6.1 Leadership and Management

- 6.1a The school benefits from the commitment of an energetic and enthusiastic headteacher who strives to provide the best possible education for the children and has a flair for liturgy.
- 6.1b The school governors play a valuable part in the life of the school, are a great support to the headteacher and staff and are involved in many aspects of the life and work of the school.
- 6.1c The parish priest is a great source of strength and support to the school in its commitment to the spiritual and moral development of the children and the best possible Religious Education it can provide for them.
- 6.1d Staff meetings regularly begin with either a prayer or short reflection which encourages the formation and development of all staff. This is a very good practice.
- 6.1e Parents appreciate the information sent out to them by the school also the Headteacher's weekly bulletins. They are proud of the school and very supportive of liturgies and other activities which take place in the school. These include parenting courses, family literacy and numeracy courses, tea n' chat with parents, book bags, parent evenings and meetings. Parents who are free to do so also assist in the school either in the classrooms or with various tasks in the school.
- 6.1f A school nurse visits the school regularly and parents are able to make an appointment to visit her if they wish to do so, with or without their child. This facility is appreciated by the parents.

6.2 Staffing, Accommodation and Resources

- 6.2a The staff are hard working, caring, dedicated and supportive of each other. Parents praised staff for the commitment and care they show towards the children and themselves.
- 6.2b A large number of non-teaching staff are well used to support pupils and help raise their levels of self respect and self esteem.

- 6.2c The non-teaching and administrative staff are loyal, hardworking and cheerful, they feel respected and valued and said that they are proud to work at the school.
- 6.2d All classroom support staff and lunchtime supervisors hold a current first aid certificate. This is good practice and of great benefit to the school.
- 6.2e Since the last inspection the school now has a foundation unit comprised of the nursery and two infant classrooms. These classrooms all open out into their own attractive outside play area which has been made completely secure. Murals have been painted, in the Key Stage 1 playground, on the walls by parents, grandparents and parishioners. A wide variety of outdoor equipment has been purchased providing a very secure and attractive area for these very young children in foundation and Key Stage 1.
- 6.2f The playground for the older children also has a very attractive wall mural designed by the children but made to scale by an artist who worked with the children. This has greatly enhanced the play area and the children are very proud of it. Windows have also been replaced in the school. The development of a parish hall “The McAuley Building” which is attached to the school is a great asset as the school is able to use this for a variety of parent meetings and classes. This room is also used by the Rainbows group which is a great asset to the school, providing help and security for children with personal problems.
- 6.2g Displays throughout the school are of a very good standard and create an attractive environment for the staff and children whilst also illustrating an appreciation of the children’s work.
- 6.2h The school is well resourced for Religious Education with an assortment of books, good quality artefacts and drapes. £550 is being spent on Religious Education resources this year and it is hoped to purchase more items relating to world faiths. All resources are catalogued by the school’s general assistant and based in various resource areas around the school for ease of access.
- 6.2i The school now has a very good library which is well stocked and gradually being added to. An I.C.T. assistant works from the library and is always available and willing to assist staff and children with any information they require.

PART THREE

7 MAIN FINDINGS

- 7.1 St Patrick’s is a good Catholic School which lives out its Mission Statement to place Christ and His teaching at the centre of school life through the practice of Gospel values and recognition of the uniqueness of the individual child.
- 7.2 The School is well supported by an active governing body which is led by a committed and involved Chair who is well informed and values the deep commitment of the staff to the school and the children they teach.

- 7.3 The parish priest who has not been long in the parish is committed to supporting the school in every way possible and is already a welcome visitor in the school.
- 7.4 Sacramental preparation which until this year was school based is now to be parish based.
- 7.5 Collective worship is a great strength of the school and is of very good quality offering opportunity for praise, celebration, reflection and thanksgiving.
- 7.6 The spiritual and moral development of the children is also a strength of the school and contributes to the happy caring environment it provides in which the children are valued and taught to value one another.
- 7.7 Good opportunities are provided for cultural development. The children are introduced to other cultures and faiths through the 'Here I Am' programme. They also learn about charity through CAFOD, Mission Together and their covenant with the poor.
- 7.8 Overall, teaching is good with some examples of excellent practice. Good provision is made in lessons for children of different abilities.
- 7.9 The children's attitudes to learning are good, they enjoy their Religious Education lessons and make good progress. However work in Religious Education books needs to be reviewed in order to maintain throughout the school the high standards already set in some classes.
- 7.10 Staff work and plan together in teams which enhances the topics and is good practice.
- 7.11 The school has a very good conscientious and enthusiastic Religious Education Co-ordinator who attends the Co-ordinator's meetings at the Diocesan Centre and disseminates information received to staff at their regular staff meetings.
- 7.12 Staff meetings always commence with prayer and are always used to discuss curriculum issues especially if a member of staff has attended a course.
- 7.13 Assessment of children's work takes place throughout the school. However, the number of topics assessed is variable and this needs to be addressed at a staff meeting. Children also review their own topics which is good practice and deepens their understanding.
- 7.14 The school has recently completed the Diocesan self evaluation document with clarity and honesty clearly identifying areas for growth.
- 7.15 Parents and parishioners are very proud of their school and appreciate the way in which they are made welcome in the school either for liturgies or to assist in classrooms, also the way in which their children are valued and learn to value and respect others.
- 7.16 All key issues identified in the last Section 23 Religious Education Inspection have been addressed by the school.

AREAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The Governors and staff of St Patrick's should now:-

- 1 Celebrate and consolidate the good progress made since the last inspection.
- 2 Continue to develop the good work on assessment already in place.
- 3 Ensure that for children in mixed age or parallel age classes their work is assessed with that of children of the same age to prevent disparity.
- 4 Review the Religious Education policy as stated in its Self Evaluation Document and incorporate sections on spiritual and moral development.
- 5 Further develop the already good practice of children writing their own prayers as identified in the Self Evaluation Document.

CONCLUSION

The Diocesan Inspector wishes to place on record her thanks for the kindness and co-operation shown by governors, parish priest, headteacher and all staff during this inspection.

APPENDIX: EVIDENCE BASE

- The programme of inspection included a pre- visit to the school and two full days of inspection.
- One Religious Education lesson was observed in each of the 12 classes.
- One whole school, one upper key stage 2 and one class liturgy were observed.
- Interviews were held with the Parish Priest, Headteacher, Chair of Governors and Religious Education Co-ordinator.
- Informal discussions were held with ancillary staff, the school caretaker, support staff and parents. Informal chats were held with children in class and over lunchtime.
- Samples of children's work, teacher planning and assessment books were provided together with class books (of activities, photographs and work throughout the year)
- A photographic record of the many activities in which the school is and has been involved – also of school/parish events.
- A wide range of excellently presented documentation as listed overleaf was also provided by the headteacher.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED FOR INSPECTION:

Whole School Documentation

1. Mission Statement and New covenant with the Poor
2. Prospectus
3. Ofsted Audit Forms S3 and S4
4. Post Ofsted Actions, reports and HMI letter
5. Diocesan self evaluation document
6. Staff handbook and booklet for newly qualified and supply staff

Policy Statements

7. Curriculum Statement
8. Special Educational Needs
9. Admissions
10. Behaviour
11. Equal opportunities

Religious Education

12. Policy for Worship and Prayer
13. Policy for Religious Education
14. Timetables for Masses assemblies and other liturgies
15. Spending on Religious Education 2002-03
16. Religious Education Inset and staff meetings
17. Examples of planning and assessment
18. Examples of monitoring and evaluation by Religious Education Co-ordinator
19. Self evaluation (pupils)
20. Religious Education Co-ordinator's job description
21. List of Religious Education resources
22. Evidence of school support for Parish based sacramental preparation.

General

23. Timetable for Inspection
24. Plan of school
25. Previous Section13/23 Report and Action Plan
26. Class timetables
27. Annual Governors' Report to Parents
28. Home School Agreement
29. Catholic population in school
30. School – Home – Parish – Diocese
31. Sample reports to parents
32. Pastoral Care
33. Letters from members of the community

SUMMARY REPORT

The major strengths in religious education, collective worship and the spiritual and moral development of the children in school:

- Collective worship is a great strength of the school.
- The spiritual and moral development of the children is also a strength of the school.
- Children's attitudes to learning are good; they enjoy their Religious Education lessons and make good progress.
- Teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent.

How the school has improved since the last inspection.

- All issues have improved since the last inspection.

How the parents view the religious education, collective worship and spiritual and moral development of their children.

- Parents are very satisfied with the Religious Education their children receive.
- They value highly the provision for the spiritual and moral development of their children.
- They praise the development of prayer and worship throughout the school and welcome opportunities to attend liturgies and assemblies.
- They express appreciation of the welcome they receive in the school and the way in which both their children and they themselves are valued.
- Parents also value the regular information sent out by the school.

Areas for further development.

The Governors and staff of St Patrick's should now:-

- 1 Celebrate and consolidate the good progress made since the last inspection.
- 2 Continue to develop the good work on assessment already in place.
- 3 Ensure that for children in mixed age or parallel age classes their work is assessed with that of children of the same age to prevent disparity.
- 4 Review the Religious Education policy as stated in its Self Evaluation Document and incorporate sections on spiritual and moral development.
- 5 Further develop the already good practice of children writing their own prayers as identified in the Self Evaluation Document.