



Inspection report

# St Pius X Roman Catholic (VA) Primary School

Better  
education  
and care

Unique Reference Number 109252  
LEA City of Bristol

Inspection number 275859  
Inspection dates 22 and 23 June 2005  
Reporting inspector Ms A Baird HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of School	Primary	School address	Gatehouse Avenue
School category	Voluntary Aided <i>Diocese of Clifton</i>		Withywood Bristol BS13 9AB
Age range of pupils	4 to 11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0117 377 2165
Number on roll	98	Fax number	0117 377 2166
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms M Regan
Date of previous inspection	November 2003	Advisory Headteacher	Ms S Theobald

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Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 11 years	21 July 2005	275859

## Introduction

When St Pius X Roman Catholic (VA) Primary School was inspected in November 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on three occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in June 2005.

### Description of the school

St Pius X Roman Catholic (VA) School is a small primary school which is located in Withywood in the south Bristol area. All the pupils are from a white British background, with no pupils learning English as an additional language. About 44 per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well above the national average. Around 27 per cent of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is also above the national average; this figure includes a relatively high number of pupils with behavioural difficulties. One pupil has a formal Statement of Special Educational Need. Since the section 10 inspection in 2003 there has been a fall in the number of pupils on roll. This is related to changes in the population in the local area.

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## Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

Prior to and immediately preceding its inspection in 2003, St Pius X Roman Catholic (VA) primary school had a number of difficulties, particularly in securing stability in the staffing of senior posts and a headteacher. At present, the school is very ably led by an advisory headteacher appointed by the local education authority (LEA); since joining the school in September 2004, she has provided determined and committed leadership. Because of a fall in the number on roll, the school is to lose a member of staff for the next academic year. However, the remaining members of staff provide a stable teaching force; they include two senior teachers who are developing an appropriate range of skills in monitoring and evaluation. The school provides a sound education for its pupils and the staff are dedicated to seeking further improvements. Standards remain too low across the school, particularly at the end of Key Stage 1 and the beginning of Key Stage 2. Many of the pupils have been hampered by shortcomings in the provision they received in previous years. They have weak literacy skills, which impede their progress in other subjects. In science, they are insecure in investigating and predicting likely outcomes; there are also weaknesses in the teachers' subject knowledge in science. However, overall, progress is at least sound in most classes and some of the pupils, particularly at the top end of Key Stage 2, make good progress. Many of the youngest pupils in the reception class display immature patterns of behaviour and social skills, but the provision is clearly targeted on securing their progress. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved significantly over time; a recently appointed learning mentor has worked very productively to secure more settled behaviour at lunch and break times. The pupils are gradually learning better work habits though their ability to work independently is at the early stages. The curriculum meets national requirements and the teachers have worked hard to ensure that statutory requirements are met. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs is good and the systems to monitor their progress are appropriate.

### Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of November 2003 required the school to address key issues concerned with improving: leadership and management; teaching and learning; standards in all areas in the Foundation Stage, in English and information and communications technology (ICT) at the end of both key stages, and in mathematics and science by the end of Year 6; and attendance and the involvement of the pupils, the parents and the community. Good progress has been made in improving leadership and management. Satisfactory progress has been made in the other areas but standards remain too low in the core subjects and attendance is unsatisfactory.

## Capacity to improve

The school is in an increasingly more secure position to sustain the progress it has made since the section 10 inspection of November 2003. The advisory headteacher from the LEA has shown a very clear awareness of the need to tackle urgently the areas of weakness. She has worked diligently and with great determination to drive forward a demanding agenda for improvement. Managing the behaviour of a small but challenging group of pupils created a number of difficulties across the school. However, rapid progress has been made in improving this aspect and procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour are now well established. The pupils' improved attitudes to learning and better behaviour have enabled the staff to concentrate their efforts more on improving standards of attainment and securing faster progress in lessons. The quality of teaching is improving though standards remain too low and there remain some weaknesses in the teachers' subject knowledge. The school has a greater awareness of how to target its teaching more effectively by identifying where pupils are not making sufficient progress; it is continuing to develop appropriate systems. The school has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve; there is a greater sense of urgency and teamwork geared towards this end. The staff have gained in confidence and benefited from the training and support they have received from the LEA. The management of the budget is efficient and the LEA has been closely involved in supporting the school to identify its needs. Attendance remains unsatisfactory though the school has worked hard to tackle this weakness.

## What the school should do to improve further

The key priorities for the school recognises the areas are to:

- raise standards, particularly in English, mathematics and science;
- continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning and secure the teachers' subject knowledge in all subjects;
- continue to develop assessment procedures to identify underachievement and put into place suitable measures to enable the pupils to improve their knowledge and understanding;
- improve attendance.

## Achievement and standards

The pupils in the Foundation Stage generally make sound progress towards achieving the nationally set early learning goals though their attainment is low. A number have difficulty in sustaining good concentration and they display immature behaviour. However, the provision is well targeted to their needs; they are being appropriately introduced to school routines. Standards remain too low at Key Stage 1 and this year's national test results are likely to remain low. At Key Stage 2, the school's results in the national tests of 2004

improved when compared with previous years and the school was closer to the average for similar schools in mathematics and English. Although this upward trend is unlikely to be maintained for this year's cohort, progress is at least sound in Year 6. The school's results in science at both key stages are very low. The school is beginning to make effective use of the information it has and has clear plans to adopt appropriate strategies to tackle underachievement. Many of the pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding as a result of weaknesses in the provision in previous years, but the school is better placed to identify and remedy these weaknesses.

The pupils' progress in lessons is generally sound; at Key Stage 2 it is often good. Although standards remain generally below national expectations, the more able pupils achieve close to this level, particularly at the top end of Key Stage 2. The overall quality of teaching is more secure and there is stronger focus on learning and achievement.

## Personal development

Behaviour in classes and around the school has improved. Attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory or better in all lessons and were consistently good at Key Stage 2. The recently appointed learning mentor has had a positive impact on the behaviour of the pupils at lunch and play times. In classes, there are higher expectations and greater consistency in the teachers' approach; the pupils recognise and welcome the procedures used to promote good behaviour. The pupils are gradually taking responsibility for their own behaviour and there are spokespersons from each class on the school council. The Year 6 representatives displayed a mature approach and were able to identify improvements that had taken place since the school became subject to special measures. They felt sure that the signing of a playground promise by all the pupils and the new playground equipment had improved the attitudes and understanding of appropriate behaviour. There have been 12 fixed-term exclusions during this school year but only one so far in summer term.

Attendance is very closely monitored and stands at 90.3 per cent for the school year to date. This is below the school's target and well below the national average. The school and educational welfare service have worked to improve attendance. The most recent efforts resulted in almost 50 per cent of the pupils showing an improved profile of attendance. However, despite the continuing efforts to promote good attendance, it remains unsatisfactory. Nonetheless, the school and the educational welfare service continue to seek solutions to the problem.

The overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sound. The provision for spiritual and moral development is good but more could be done to promote a better understanding of cultural diversity. A prayer corner and opportunities for quiet reflection contribute to the pupils' understanding of religion and contemplation. The provision at the Foundation Stage offers the pupils opportunities to have a sense of awe and wonder. In assembly, the pupils behaved very well and showed positive attitudes. Most pupils have respect for adults and each other. Recently two pupils have been involved in a scheme for gifted young athletes.

## Quality of provision

Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory. It was very good in one lesson, good in two, and satisfactory in two. There was a close match between the quality of teaching and learning and where the teaching was well focused the pupils made at least sound progress. The staff have responded positively to advice in how to improve their planning. They identified clearly the key questions and the support for those pupils who have special educational needs. More effective use of ICT is being made to support the teaching but this is at an early stage in some classes.

In the most successful lessons, there was a good pace and the pupils concentrated well. Working in pairs helped the pupils to listen to each other's ideas before offering their own to the whole class. Some teachers were very skilled in promoting good behaviour and responses. Relationships between the teachers and the pupils are good. The learning support assistants worked productively with pupils and often anticipated where their efforts were best focused.

There remain a number of weaknesses. The pupils did not always have sufficient opportunity to develop independence or to contribute orally. Occasionally, the pupils found it difficult to articulate their ideas and were not given the support to enable them to do this.

The school's systems for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress are becoming increasingly effective. Planning makes use of the information gathered to provide additional support. The provision for those pupils who have special educational needs is good and there is a rich evidence base on their work. The teachers' plans appropriately address their needs.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and is based on national requirements. Although resources to support science and mathematics teaching have been improved, the school's materials in many subjects are dated. The provision for science requires further improvement. The pupils have appropriate access to ICT, which is taught regularly. Gaps in their knowledge and understanding are being tackled. The teachers are also developing a range of appropriate ICT skills to support their teaching though not all are fully confident. The school has benefited from considerable refurbishment.

The school pays appropriate attention to matters of health and safety and important routines are well established.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. The LEA's advisory headteacher has worked very diligently to improve the provision at the school. She has been successful in tackling the urgent issues which faced the school in September 2004 after a period of various changes in leadership and staffing. She has been conscientious, inspiring to the staff, and has forged good links with the community. The permanent teaching staff are a small team and have

taken on a range of new roles. The relatively new senior management team is becoming increasingly effective as these members of staff gain in confidence and competence. Subject leaders are developing their role in monitoring and evaluation. They have benefited from a good programme of training and now bring better levels of consistency to their work. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory, although greater emphasis needs to be given to gauging progress and providing a firm evidence base.

The governing body has clear systems for its operation. It is aware of its role in monitoring and evaluation and has steadily improved its procedures. The curriculum committee functions effectively. The chair of the governing body provides a strong lead and is aware of the needs of the school.

The LEA has provided good levels of support; its reviews have accurately identified the progress made. It has been closely involved in helping the staff to develop their skills in monitoring and evaluation. The support for numeracy and literacy has been very effective. The school improvement officer has worked closely with the advisory headteacher to identify how to improve the provision; she has a good understanding of the school's needs.

## Appendix – Information about the inspection

St Pius X Roman Catholic (VA) Primary School was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in November 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in May and November 2004 and in March 2005 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of November 2003.

In June 2005, one HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Five part lessons and one assembly were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the advisory headteacher, the chair of governors, and a representative from the LEA and informally with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of November 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.



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