



Report on IQM Inclusive School Award



School Name: St Patricks Catholic Primary School
Upper Hill Street
Liverpool
Merseyside
L8 5UX

Head/Principal: Joanne Lewis

IQM Lead: Sarah Lally

Assessment Date: 17th December 2020

Assessor: Kenny Frederick

Sources of Evidence:

- School website
- Ofsted Report & Performance tables
- Videos of children's Christmas performances

Meetings Held with:

- Headteacher
- Deputy Head
- Two parents
- SENCOs – KS1 and KS2
- School Therapist
- Three teachers
- Four members of support staff
- 6 pupils from Years 5 & 6
- The Chair of Governors



Overall Evaluation

It is true that good (great) things come in small packages. St Patricks Catholic Primary School is a small but perfectly formed school that is leading the way in terms of inclusive policy and practice. Everyone I spoke to demonstrate their full commitment to the school, the children as well as to families and the community. There is a real commitment to inclusion and it permeates every aspect of the school.

The Headteacher is a very determined leader who acknowledges the fact that 'love is her 'leadership style'. She talks about the school as being an extended family and makes it clear that children come first. Not only is the pastoral care of pupils exceptional but the school has high expectations in terms of outputs and in terms of behaviour. The Headteacher has high expectations of staff and pupils and they don't let her down. She leads by example and is well supported by her Deputy and Leadership Team. However, a distributed leadership model throughout the school means that staff have a clear direction and have high aspirations for the pupils. They know their families and their community very well and do what they can to help pupils mitigate and overcome the many barriers to their learning and wellbeing. The leadership of the Head and SLT is very effective and reaches the hearts and minds of staff, pupils and families.

The Headteacher said that she wants what middle class children have for her children and the curriculum is designed to help them develop their Cultural Capital and their confidence and self-esteem. She ensures that every child learns a musical instrument and that they have a broad and balanced curriculum with an emphasis on the Arts and sport. Children are expected to work hard and try their best. In return children are loved and cherished and feel safe and secure in the school.

Teachers and support staff are highly skilled and are well trained and supported. There is a collaborative and collegial approach and adults support each other in their role of supporting the children. They are creative in their roles, what they are doing and if they can't do it the way they used to do they work together to find a way of doing it. There is a real can-do attitude that transfers to the pupils. The curriculum has been developed to make it relevant for their pupils.

Teachers are confident in their roles and confident in asking for help if they need it. They said they are trusted to carry out their roles and are 'done with' not 'done to'. Their wellbeing is carefully considered by the Leadership Team and measures are in place to help them manage their workload. The school is very good at spotting and developing talent in staff and they thrive as result. Staff turnover is very low as a result. Children with special educational needs are identified and every effort is made to remove barriers to learning. Support and interventions is carefully targeted and teachers and TAs are trained and supported to meet the needs of the children in the classroom. Staff go above and beyond the realms of their job description to meet the needs of the children and families in the school. They do what needs to be done without question.

Parents are very appreciative of everything the school does for them; they feel very lucky that their children have secured a place in this very special school. They know their children are loved and they know they are well taught. They know their children



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are happy and love coming to school. They also know that if they as parents need support they just have to ask the school and they will do what they can to help.

I am of the opinion that the school fully meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark's Inclusive School Award. There are only minor areas requiring development and the school is aware of these. I recommend that the school be awarded IQM's Inclusive School Award and be reassessed in 3 years' time.

I also recommend that the school should consider applying for Centre of Excellence status subject to the inclusion within its plans of the appropriate areas for development and the completion of the Centre of Excellence documentation. If the school chooses to pursue this status and it were to be awarded the school would be subject to annual review from this point forwards.

Assessor: Kenny Frederick

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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Joe McCann MBA NPQH

Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd



Element 1 - The Inclusion Values of the School

I was able to meet all the members of the SLT, one of the Governors as well as many members of staff and a couple of parents/carers, who all made clear their commitment to inclusion. Every child matters here individual difference is valued. The school population is made of pupils of many faiths and ethnicities and they are all very proud of who they are. The pupils I met were particularly vocal about this and said this was one of the best things about the school.

I met with the two SENCOs who manage and organise the inclusion of children with special educational needs throughout the school. Although this is a small school there are a great many children who need additional support and the fact there are two SENCOs means the leadership recognise and fund this valuable resource. Both colleagues teach full time as class teachers but as the school operates a team arrangement where there is an extra teacher shared between two classes, they are able to be released for SEN and leadership work.

The school is a one-form entry school with twenty-eight percent of children on the SEN register but there are only two EHCPs (with two in the pipeline). Much of the need in the school is around poverty and disadvantage, which means the support needed is extraordinary. Staffing is generous to reflect this need. There are three teachers allocated between two classes and one TA in every class and there are some one-to-one TAs who work mostly (but not exclusively) with individual children. The school believes that they need to concentrate their resources on putting support in place for children rather than spending too much time doing applications for EHCPs. This way most of the EP time can be used to support children rather than writing reports for plans. However, they know that plans may be needed as the children move to secondary school and ensure they are applied for in KS2.

Speech and language is the most common barrier to learning and currently one of the TAs is completing the ELCAN training so she can support individual children. The second most common barrier is specific learning difficulties and the excellent EP gives advice to teachers and TAs on meeting the needs of these children in the classroom. He visits the school once a month and he was brought up in the local area, he understands the needs of children and families and is very dedicated to working with them. There is also a Local Authority Advisor who offers limited (but useful) support. The school has a very large Provision Register that monitors who is getting what intervention and individual chronologies for each child.

The SENCOs are part of a SENCO Consortia with eight other schools and they meet once a term (along with Headteachers) to share good practice and to share concerns. There is also a well-used WhatsApp group where colleagues can ask each other for advice or just communicate what is happening in their school or area. They do lots of training together and with the DGT network of seventeen schools in the local area. Collaboration is very important to the way the school works and is the byword when working with others.

Safeguarding processes and procedures are extremely effective. I met with the Deputy Head who is the Lead DSL and leads on Mental Health Policy and practice. She describes



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the school as her family, a phrase used by many of the people I spoke to during my visit. Her responsibilities include Safeguarding, Parental Engagement, Curriculum, Pupil Welfare and wellbeing. Thankfully (in view of her many responsibilities) she is a non-teaching Deputy. The Safeguarding Team is a team of three which she told me is important as they want to be as sure as they can be that they are making the right decisions. They supervise each other and have weekly meetings to talk about particular cases and make decisions. However, they also get together as necessary as issues arise. When they have a particularly difficult case they are dealing with they and bring in the Play Story and Life Story Therapist, to help them decide on the right course of action. There is an experienced Safeguarding Governor who meets with her regularly and all staff, Governor training is in place with frequent reminders about what they need to do if a safeguarding issue arises. The Local Authority are good at supporting with safeguarding and they came in and carried out safeguarding audits to Quality Assure their processes. The school use CPOMS to record all safeguarding information and find this very useful.

There is a very detailed Wellbeing Policy and there are many things in place to support children and adults. The Deputy Head is a THRIVE Practitioner and she said it is 'love all the way'. It is about staff as well as children. She is disseminating thrive practice throughout the school and she said there are noticeable differences/improvements in Early Years since it was introduced. She told me it is 'about the language we use' and children need to know they are listened to. The School Therapist has also done Attachment Training with staff so they are able to adapt and change their practice to support children.

The school population is not a mobile one and the school is oversubscribed, so there are very few casual admissions and subsequently, very little transition work to do. As a small school, children know all the teachers in the school so movement from one class to another (even after a COVID-19 lockdown) was not difficult. The school prepares Year 6 pupils for secondary school and help parents sort out applications. Transition for SEN pupils may be more problematic and the process may start in Year 5, if that is in the best interest of the child.

Pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium funding are clearly identified and are carefully tracked. There is an understanding that they do not all have the same need and there are clear plans in place to support individual needs. Outcomes for these pupils are generally good. The school website has the relevant information about Pupil Premium.

I met with the Play Therapist who has worked in the school for over twenty years and she also does therapeutic life story work across the school. She supports children in the school but also does outreach work in many different schools. This way she can fund her own post. She receives supervision for her Life Story Therapy and has separate supervision regarding the Play Therapy. She provides a lot of training and development for staff around wellbeing of children and staff. She encourages staff to think about ways they can support their own wellbeing. She told me many members of staff struggled during the COVID-19 crisis and are still dealing with the fall-out.



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Strengths:

- The commitment of the leadership to inclusive policy and practice is extraordinary. This commitment is communicated to all stakeholders who embrace the inclusive culture and ethos and make it work in practice.
- Provision for pupils with SEN is exceptional.
- Provision for children with social and emotional needs is exceptional.
- Safeguarding processes are central to the school ethos and culture.

Areas for Development:

- Ensuring the provisions are sustainable is the biggest challenge to the school over the next two or three years.



Element 2 - The Learning Environment, Resources and ICT

As this was a virtual assessment I was unable to visit the school in person but the areas that I could see looked spacious and well maintained. I was told that the school was originally built for two forms of entry but only admits one, so space is not an issue. Classrooms and the playgrounds are large and well equipped. There is an astro-turfed playground used for football, fitness equipment, a pond, a poly-tunnel and a forest school area. Each of these have been designed to be used during playtimes times as well as for curriculum teaching.

There is a Library which I was told was amazing, a Music Room and Meeting and an intervention room. There is also a sensory room that has been turned into a Thrive Room. The Learning Mentor also has her own room. Most of my discussions took place in a large meeting room that is often (pre-COVID 19 restrictions) used for multi-agency meetings amongst other things. The school is on two floors but all classrooms are downstairs and when a child with mobility problems needs to use the Library of Music Room etc. these are brought down stairs where they can access them.

Work from all children and all abilities is displayed across the school. They frequently have a whole school display in the central hall, which incorporates artwork and writing from every child from nursery to Year 6. Resources are located throughout the school; they are located for accessibility to those who require them and also in a central location in a resource room.

There is a computer suite with 30 windows PCs that can be booked by class teachers and there are 15 laptops and 60 iPads for use in classrooms. All teachers have iPads and all TAs have tablets. Good quality wi-fi is available throughout the school. A range of Apps are used to support the curriculum and particular interventions. There are school accounts for online learning such as Active Learn, Doodle Maths, Times Tables Rockstars to name but a few. These were particularly useful during lockdown and when pupils were self-isolating this term. The School Blog was and is used to support home learning. Wellcomm and Tapestry are used in EYFS to assess children and identify their needs and set targets. Resources for individual pupils are identified, discussed and purchased as required. Advice is sought from external agencies (SENISS, EP, Alder Hey) and appropriate equipment and resources are purchased.

Teaching Assistant deployment and use supports good learning in all classrooms. I was able to meet with four TAs most of who have worked in the school for many years. Between them they have many talents, experience and a great deal of expertise. One has recently completed a Yoga Course (supported by the school) and she now runs Yoga classes for pupils and staff as part of their wellbeing programme. Another TA is has a degree in Psychology and is also a talented sportswoman who runs football sessions with the girls. She is also running Lego Therapy sessions (under the guidance of the School Therapist). Another is a Nursery Nurse who now works as a TA in EYFS. Another TA runs an after school gymnastics Club.

The Teaching Assistant work closely with class teachers and plans are shared. Collaboration and collegiality are key ingredients to this partnership and they work together to support the children. The teacher takes responsibility for all children and



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plans accordingly taking advice from TAs about meeting the needs of those with particular needs. Some of the TAs run intervention groups or work with group in class. They may also work one-to-one as required by the class teacher.

The group told me that support staff (in all areas of the school) at the school feel valued. They feel their contribution is valued by SLT and by the teaching staff as well as by the pupils. They told me the leadership is very supportive and is very aware of their needs, particularly when things have been difficult at home. One of the group told me how the school had supported her when her husband was taken seriously ill. The told the school is like an extended family and they are very flexible in their approach so part-time working is perfectly acceptable and possible.

Training and development for TA is ongoing and mostly school based. However, they can ask for additional training courses if there is something that would add to their expertise. They are invited to attend staff meetings but they are not paid additionally for the extra hours, so if training is relevant it is repeated for them at one of their morning meetings. The Deputy Head does all their Performance Management Reviews.

The group told me about their experience during the COVID-19 lockdown. Those who were clinically vulnerable (or who lived with people who were) were asked to work from home whilst others worked on a Rota basis in school, supporting the HUB provision for vulnerable and key worker children and working from home. Most completed different courses when at home whilst other did step visits (with another member of staff) to very vulnerable pupils homes as well as making wellbeing checks by phone and Zoom. They told me they had all wanted to be called into work in HUB. They also organised fun activities for staff. They spoke about all that the school had done to ensure their safety during and following lockdown.

The school celebrates achievement at different levels and in a variety of ways. Children, staff and parents spoke about these celebrations that go on (differently) even during COVID-19 restrictions.

Strengths:

- Deployment of TAs is very effective in supporting SEN children.
- Teaching Assistants work in partnership with teachers and they feel they are valued members of the school team.
- The learning environment is well planned, well-resourced and is well used.

Areas for Development:

- There are no areas for development.

Element 3 - Learner Attitudes, Values and Personal Development

During my virtual visit I met with six pupils from Year 5 and 6, this was possible as Year 5 and 6 are in the same bubble. They told me lockdown was hard and they missed their friends and their teachers. They were really happy to be back even though the new restrictions made everything different. They were now used to the new arrangements. They had not had to do tests when they came back but were covering topic they might have done during the previous years, so teachers knew what they had to teach them now. They were worried they might have forgotten everything from the previous years but it was better than they thought it would be. Year 6 would normally have a residential trip this year but this is currently on-hold. The pupils and staff remain optimistic that this might be able to take place.

The pupils told me that they know about what progress they are making as their teachers tell them how they are doing. They mark their books and assessments and give them feedback. When they were on lockdown they completed lots of work that had been set and since they came back they have been using TEAMS for when they have to self-isolate. They all have iPads (mostly provided by the school) and they were able to access the work. If not they were sent paper packs and could talk to the teachers by phone.

When they came back to school in September they had a different teacher, they knew who this was because they had a letter home who the new teacher was. They already knew the teacher (it's a very small school) so it was not a problem. The Teaching Assistant that was in their previous class stayed with the class and moved up with them, this provided continuity of relationships.

I spoke to the pupils about behaviour in the school, which they described as very good. The staff told me it was a restorative approach and was designed to make sure children understood how their actions might upset or offend others. If they misbehave they have to think about what they have done and why they did it. They said teachers are fair and listen to them and they try very hard to get better. They said there is no problem with bullying but if people are unkind to each other they are encouraged to talk about it and staff will help them sort it out. There is always someone to talk to.

Pupil Voice is strong as children are able to speak freely to staff and say they are always taken seriously and always listened to. They also have a School Council with representatives from all year groups. In order to be on the School Council they have to make a speech and be elected by their peers.

I asked pupils to tell me the best things about the school and they came up with a long list including:

- The friendly atmosphere.
- The people/teachers and pupils.
- Opportunities go on trips.



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- Equal rights and are treated equally – everybody is respected.
- School lunch and playtimes.
- Friends – good personalities and if I feel down.
- Teachers – help you when you are struggling and extra challenge if you need it.
- The reward systems including Graduation and Children’s Oscars.

When I asked them to tell me anything they would change if they could they found it difficult to come up with anything but eventually suggested:

- A roof on the bike store in the Secret Garden – (to keep bikes dry).
- Additional time in the week for subjects like DT and Art and Music.
- More competitions.
- Longer break times.

Pupils have a clear understanding of the policies on behaviour, bullying and harassment. They understand that inclusion is not about treating everyone the same but is about meeting the needs of individual children. Whilst there is a general Behaviour Policy, staff are able to tailor it to fit the children’s needs. It is applied flexibly and children and staff understand why this is the case. The consistency is with the individual pupil not the group. It is a restorative approach and is about getting pupils to understand their behaviour.

There is effective induction of pupils who join the school at different times (not in Nursery or Reception) or at the start of term. There were only five casual entrants last year and most were looked after children. The pupils told me this was a welcoming school and when new children come in they look after them and be their friends. The teachers told me they partner them up with a buddy and look into their background at their previous school.

The children told me they like the fact that their school has lots of different people and they all show respect for each other and they like learning about different cultures, religions and languages. They said they like taking on new responsibilities and helping staff and each other.

The pupils I met told me that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic they had lots of clubs and activities after school and some of them went to all of them. They are hoping these can start again soon. Most of all they love all the trips and visits they used to go on as part of their learning experience. Teachers call this increasing their Cultural Capital but to pupils these were just another way to learn new things.



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Strengths:

- Pupils attitudes to learning are very good and pupils want to achieve their very best.
- Behavior in the school is very good and there is a clear policy that is applied flexibly (according to the child).
- Pupil Voice is strong and is developing.

Areas for Development:

- It might be an idea to involve Pupil Voice, including (but not exclusively) the School Council about the developing curriculum and about what happens in the classroom.



Element 4 - Learner Progress and the Impact on Learning

The school demographic means that many of children are in deprivation quintile 5, which is the most deprived of all schools nationally. As a result, many pupils are impoverished and children often have extremely limited vocabulary.

Children join the school working significantly below the national standard and the work hard to meet the needs of all children from the moment they start to ensure they are able to progress and reach their individual potential. To have utilised the Pupil Premium budget together with the SEND notional budget to employ additional teachers – the team teaching approach, ensuring all pupils are receiving quality first teaching appropriate to their stage of development; it also helps gives them an opportunity to work closely with children and families to close any academic or social gaps.

Many children have EAL needs and many parents don't speak English. There is an (Arabic) translator but the school can usually find and recruit translators in other languages if they are needed. There is no EAL Specialist in the school but there is an expectation that every teacher needs to be an EAL teacher. They are all trained to understand the errors children with their EAL make in their writing. There is an emphasis on oral skills to help develop fluency.

Children are tracked carefully and interventions are put in place as required. Pupil Progress meetings are used to discuss individual pupil progress and to identify any emerging needs and to find solutions. The data for Key Stage 2 show that in reading, maths and GPS are significantly above local and national average and broadly in line with these averages in writing. This is very positive as 36.7% of this class were on the SEND register and 63.3% of the class were disadvantaged.

At Key Stage 1, data shows that the school is either in line with or above national and local averages. This is positive because over 50% of the cohort, were disadvantaged and 30.7% of the class are on the SEND register.

Data is collected on an on-going basis and analysis informs teaching and learning at an individual level. Quality First Teaching is implemented and individual learning targets are known to pupils and staff. Children are ambitious and want to achieve well and teachers and TAs work with them to motivate them and help them achieve their targets.

The children I spoke to told me that feedback from teachers, oral and written, and peer and self-evaluation help them to make progress.

Strengths:

- Achievement and progress across the school is very positive.
- The school sets ambitious targets for pupils at all levels.
- Tracking of pupils is carefully managed and monitored and is used to inform teaching and interventions.



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Areas for Development:

- It might be appropriate to look at more training for staff on meeting the needs of pupils with English as a Second Language (EAL), particularly having a focus on their writing. They already have some expertise in this area but it is important not to lose a focus on the needs of this group of children.



Element 5 - Learning and Teaching (Monitoring)

High quality teaching and an appropriate curriculum are central to the school's inclusion policy and practice. Most of the additional support children receive takes place in the classroom and teachers fully accept their responsibilities for meeting the needs of all pupils. Whilst they receive support from the SENCOs and Teaching Assistants they need to plan and deliver lessons that will ensure all children make at least expected progress.

The Deputy Head explained that the curriculum had been reviewed and adapted well before Ofsted decided to concentrate more on it. It is an ongoing process but the aim is and was to tailor the curriculum to suit the children and families. She told me families are changing and there are now more working families. The History curriculum is particularly relevant as the population is changing and they want to ensure everyone is included in the curriculum. So, they look at local history in particular. Music is a real strength of the school and every child learns an instrument. They go to great lengths to find out the children are good and then they do it.

During my visit I met with three members of teaching staff who told me all about their experience working in the school. They have all been in the school for a number of years and told me "St Patrick's is a hard place to leave... it is so special". They clearly love the school and the staff. They said the Head and Deputy are so very supportive and furthermore, "what we do for the children here is very special".

The teachers said there are lots of opportunities to develop their CV as they all hold many other responsibilities (besides being class teachers). They are moved into different year groups fairly regularly, which keeps them on their toes in terms of curriculum and teaching methods. They told me about the Team Teacher Policy and how it benefits staff and children. They feel confident in asking for help and for support when they need it. Although they don't have a partner teacher to plan with they can seek advice from Subject Leaders. Subject Leaders help with the planning and go in and out of class when they can. In addition, there has been a lot of work developing coaching and mentoring across the school.

The teachers told me that the CPD programme helps them to develop their teaching skills and to maximize every minute of the day. They learn about new techniques and about quality first teaching. They use (pre-COVID) coaching techniques and video each other teaching and discuss it together. They can also apply to go out on external courses if they need or want to.

The school Learning and Teaching Policy is well known and implemented and is carefully monitored. Teachers are not expected to plan in a certain way but are expected to teach in a particular way and this involves doing a short reflection at end of every lesson. Whilst they may be following a particular scheme of work they have the freedom to be creative and make lessons as engaging as possible. They always include a variety of experiences to increase the Cultural Capital children are exposed to. Currently they are having to do this in a different way as trips are no longer possible. They told me they are encouraged to take risks and try things out. SLT will always support them in this.



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Teachers are very aware of the needs of all the children in their class and they have the skills and experience to meet those individual needs. They are also aware of the expected outcomes for each pupil's at different times of the year. The Marking and Feedback Policy has been reviewed and updated and is now more manageable whilst providing good feedback to children about their work. Verbal and whole class feedback is used along with limited individual written feedback to inform children about the progress they are making. More formal assessments are also used and outcomes from all marking and assessments are used to inform planning. Teaching Assistants are highly valued and they support pupil learning very effectively.

Accountability measures and Performance Management processes are in place but they told me these were supportive and were not oppressive. They don't feel like they are under surveillance. They feel they are trusted. Collaboration and collegiality are the way they become better teachers as colleagues work together to plan and teach high quality lessons.

We spoke about the way teachers had carried out remote learning during lockdown and how they have been providing home learning for pupils who are self-isolating. Children and staff were thrilled to be back at school and while they were worried about their anxiety levels they seemed to have adapted to the current restrictions and are getting on with things. They have had their first semi-formal assessments last week and they are reassured that everyone seems to have caught up with their learning gaps.

Strengths:

- Teachers are experienced and well trained and provide high quality teaching for pupils at all levels of ability.
- Teachers understand that the progress of all pupils in their class is their responsibility and they know they are supported in doing this.
- CPD is well planned and appropriate.
- Distributed leadership allows teachers to develop their skills and experience in a range of curriculum areas.

Areas for Development:

- There are no areas for development other than continuing the work that is already going on to continuously improve the quality of teaching and learning.



Element 6 - Parents, Carers and Guardian

I spoke to two parents/carers during my virtual visit to the school. These were parents of children who were on the SEND register and I was able to talk to them after they dropped their children off at school. One parent has two children one in Year 2 and another one starting in Nursery next year. Her Year 2 pupil loves school. She told me the first two weeks of lockdown went well for the first two weeks and then the 'madness started'. The school sent work homes and he was proud to show teachers his work but not so keen to follow the instructions of his parents. He does have a medical need that has been addressed by a small operation and he appears to be much better now. However, he was diagnosed with dyslexia fairly recently and the school have put measures in to support him.

This parent told me she had stood as a Parent Governor but was not elected as the other person was more qualified (a different skill-set) than her. She feels very lucky that her child has a place at the school and her Nursery aged child will attend in September. She likes the small size of the school and the family atmosphere where every child is known and loved by all staff.

The other parent I spoke two was a foster carer of six children from two different families. The family circumstances were difficult but she says the school were and continue to be amazing. She also said she is well supported by her social workers are amazing. She told me lockdown was tricky but the time together brought the family together and helped them develop their relationships. The school kept in close contact during this time and gave the children and her lots of support. This parent/carer told me that there have been a lot of challenging times at home and the school have really helped the family get through them. They said the children can speak up and say what has happened at home. She said her children are really settled and they belong. She can ask for nothing more for them.

Both parents said that communication between the school and home is excellent and they can always speak to someone in person or on the phone. Any worries or concerns can be raised and someone will listen and offer advice. They can speak to any teacher available – not just the class teacher. They like the fact that emails are used to communicate – they are better than letters, which their children often forget to hand over. They don't miss anything when the communication is via email. During lockdown there was lots of communication from the school and they sent cheerful messages and sent video of them reading stories and did assemblies over TEAMS. Although, there was plenty of work set parents did not feel under any pressure to make their children complete it. Teachers checked in and messaged them on twitter.

Both parents told me their children feel valued and included and they have lots of opportunities to participate in after school activities and trips (pre-COVID 19). They said they like the fact that the school is diverse with different faiths and cultures. They say they were lucky to get in as the school has very good reputations and there is a waiting list to get in.

The school has had to be creative in finding ways to celebrate Christmas this year due to the COVID-19 restrictions. There is a virtual nativity play (which I viewed) and Year 1 &



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2 musical performance (which I also had the pleasure to see) and these are put on the school website for parents/carers to view.

The Deputy Head told me that parents/carers are always welcomed in the school and since COVID-19 restrictions the Head is always on one gate and Deputy Head on the other to welcome children and talk to parents. Class teachers are also available on the gate and they can take a parent aside if a private word is required. In normal times there are assemblies every Monday and Friday and these are always well attended by parents. She said that there are regular phone calls and home visits she often drops children off home or collects them, if it means they can attend school. All safeguarding measures are taken but they do what every needs to be done. Herself and the Head worked all the way through lockdown, as they felt it was important to keep the school open throughout – holidays included.

The school regularly seeks parents' views on a range of school issues through surveys and on-going conversations. They really values the views of parents.

Strengths:

- Parents feel that they are welcomed and included in every aspect of school life. Staff listen to them and take them seriously.
- The school is constantly searching for further ways to involve parents and carers. They are very reflective and want to continue to improve their practice in this area.

Areas for Development:

- There are no areas for development.



Element 7 - Governing Body and Management: External Accountability/Support

I met with the Chair of Governors who became a Governor when her child was in Year 2. She applied to become a Parent Governor. She now has another child in the school and is now Chair of Governors. She said the Governors are a good team and are a well-established Governing Body. However, they recently lost some really experienced Governors due to retirement but have been able to recruit new ones with similar skillsets – if not the same experience. The Chair of the Finance Committee has a background in finance and the school has a Business Manager who is supported by someone who comes in from LA. In addition, a new parent governor has just joined the team and she has SEND experience.

The Chair understands why many parents are reticent about joining the Governors, as they believe they don't have the right skills and are daunted by the formal meetings and procedures. Every effort is made to support them when they do join. They try to make everybody really welcome. The Governing Body is now diverse and reflects the school population to some degree.

There is a new Clerk who is finding his feet but seems to be efficient and takes comprehensive and succinct minutes. The Chair told me that Governors come to meetings well prepared and having read all the papers they have been sent. They are able to ask challenging questions and she manages to keep them on task and on time, but this is harder on Zoom.

Regular visits to the school were a normal part of the Governors' duties but these are no longer possible due to COVID-19 restrictions. They miss these visits as they were a good way of getting to know people and to see the school at work. Currently the Chair is the SEN Governor but are hoping this role will be taken on by the new Parent Governor who works in this area. There is also a named Safeguarding Governor.

The Chair of Governors told me that the Governing Body are very committed to inclusion. She said, "it runs through everything we do". The attitude is if we can't do it this way we need to try it another way. The school leadership is very creative and do everything possible to include each and every child and the governors are fully supportive of this aim.

Governors are very aware of the heavy load the Headteacher and her Deputy have been carrying since the COVID-19 pandemic and they have tried to give them as much personal support as possible. The Chair is in regular touch with the Head and she sees her and the Deputy every morning when she drops her child off at school. She is also at the end of the phone if she needs to talk. She told me that the Head and Deputy and the others in the team are very close and very supportive of each other.

The Local Authority Governors Services provide good support and provide training for the Clerk and for Governors themselves. The courses are well attended and are of a high quality. The Governors HUB is where agendas and papers and further information is stored and this is a very useful way to communicate. The school is also part of NGA and adopts their Code of Conduct for Governors. The Archdiocese also offers a range of training opportunities for Governors.

One of my first meetings of the day was with the Headteacher of St Patrick's. The most immediate problem she has been dealing with since March has been and still is the COVID-



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19 pandemic. When I met her, she had just come back from watching the Year 1 and 2 singing their Christmas songs – it was being filmed for parents and left her a little tearful to see they carry on as (near) normal during such difficult times. This term three ‘bubbles’ went down which included three members of staff with it. All the systems were in place to deal with the subsequent issues and isolation needed.

We talked about lockdown and what had happened over that time, she and her Deputy Head were in school almost every day (including holidays) to coordinate everything and to ensure the school was ready to be opened to all in September.

During lockdown the school joined a Hub with three other schools in their network and this formed good friendships and good collaboration amongst the Heads and Deputies and other staff who worked together during this time. The regular phone calls to parents during this time really strengthened the relationship with families. The food parcels provided and delivered for needy families really made a difference to them. The Local Authority (School Improvement Team) helped all the schools in the Authority make sense of the DFE Guidance and produced several templates for risk assessments and other necessary documentation. All systems for tracking and tracing (in the event of outbreaks) are in place. The Head told me staff at every level on the school were fabulous and made her job easier.

The Head has been at the school since 2007 when she joined as Deputy and became Acting Head and then substantive Head in 2015. She told me her policy is to do things because they are “right for our children”. She has the “guts to say no” if something is not going to benefit the children. She has a great Senior Team who give her great support. She does not feel alone – it’s a team effort. Distributed leadership is the way of working in this school. The school is like a very real family.

As a small school the budget is difficult to manage and it is getting tougher and her biggest battle will be to keep hold of the team teachers. The school results are evidence that this investment produces good outcomes but even so it may not be sustainable as a model in the future.

The Headteacher told me she has brilliant Governors and her Chair of Governors is very able and very experienced. The Governors are really interested and invested in the school. She said they are challenging but not demanding and they give her a lot of support. There is a good spread of experience and skills on the Governing Body and are a real asset to the school.

Strengths:

- Leadership of the school is very effective.
- The Governance of the school is effective and supportive and governors feel very proud of the school.

Areas for Development:

- There are no areas for development



Element 8 - The School in the Community

The school has an excellent reputation within the local community and the school is very oversubscribed with a long waiting list. Although this is a Catholic school over 40% of pupils are from other faiths and this makes for a diverse and inclusive community.

There are extensive links with other networks of schools who collaborate and work together. In addition, they work with many local and wider clubs and organisations. If there is an organisation that can support the school, their pupils and families the school are always keen to work with them. Post-COVID these links are more problematic (COVID-19 restrictions) but they will resume as soon as possible and is safe.

The school shares resources and expertise with a wide range of schools and in return receive support from other schools. Networks are extensive and are well used by staff at all levels. The school mini bus and Astro-turf are shared with other schools. In addition, the Consortia model involves being linked with eight other local schools to buy in services for SEND and share expertise.

Strengths:

- The school is at the center of their community and have an excellent reputation and are very oversubscribed.
- The school works with many local organizations and agencies for the benefit of the children.
- The school knows the local community very well and builds on that knowledge to support children and families.

Areas for Development:

- The school will continue to work within the local community to strengthen links where appropriate.