

THE VALIDATION REPORT



This report to the Bishop of the Diocese under Canon 806 of the Code of Canon Law is also the report to the governors of the school on religious education. For Catholic maintained schools, the report also fulfils the requirements of Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

NAME OF SCHOOL	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
ADDRESS	Cookham Road Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 7EG
URN	110028
CHAIR OF GOVERNORS	Mr Hans Daems
HEADTEACHER	Mrs Janice Laycock
NAMES OF VALIDATORS	Miss Carol McIvor Mr James Carroll
DATES OF THE VALIDATION VISIT	27 th November 2012 4 th December 2012

Information about the school

Number of pupils on roll	300
Number of boys	153
Number of girls	147
Number of statemented pupils	3
Percentage of Catholic pupils	68%
Number of teaching staff	17
Number of support staff	35
Percentage of Catholic staff	53%

St Mary's is a slightly larger than average primary school, which mainly draws its pupils from the Catholic community in the borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The school serves the parishes of St Joseph's, Maidenhead and St Elizabeth's in Cookham, which is a satellite parish. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is above average, as is the proportion speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average.

The school's effectiveness in providing Catholic education

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is an outstanding example of a Catholic community. It provides a distinctly Catholic education in a warm and welcoming environment in which all members of the community are valued and supported in the spirit of the Gospels.

The head and deputy provide strong leadership, which values the contributions of all. Religious education (RE) is very well led and managed. The RE manager guides and supports staff, who fully embrace the Catholic nature of the school and as a result pupils are given a firm faith foundation. The teaching of RE is imaginative and effective; the pupils' engage well in lessons and their work is of a high standard. The school works very well in partnership with its parish and diocese.

All aspects of its new mission statement are evident throughout the school: in relationships between all members of the community; the very good attitudes to curriculum RE, standards in learning and commitment to the development of relationship with God.

a) Key strengths of the school

- The strong Catholic ethos, which is embodied in the commitment of the whole community to the mission of the school.
- The evident pride that the leadership team have in the staff and pupils of the school.
- The very strong leadership of RE, which provides excellent support and guidance for staff.
- Links with other schools and faith communities, which have been developed both locally and internationally; they provide rich and real opportunities to develop children's knowledge and understanding of other cultures.
- The quality of support offered by the governors, who are strongly committed to the school.
- The pupils, who are outstanding ambassadors for the school. They clearly enjoy school and are articulate in voicing the many things that make it a special place where, as one girl said: "We are basically one family; everyone looks out for one another."
- The high quality of worship, which enhances the spiritual development of pupils and staff.
- The commitment of many staff to developing their own theological knowledge in order to further enhance the children's learning experience.
- The very good attitudes to learning and behaviour, both of which help to enable pupils to produce work of a high quality.
- Parents' commitment to and support for the school.

b) Key areas for development

- To continue to develop the school's work on assessment in RE, so that it can report more precisely on the overall provision and standards in the subject.
- To maintain and develop further governors' understanding of the outcomes of the school's monitoring schedule in RE.

c) Progress since the last validation

The school has successfully addressed key issues identified in the last inspection, which took place in 2007. In the current validation the following improvements were noted:

- The work the school has done to share and enhance the quality and experience of worship in the school.
- The continuing development of staff skills, knowledge and expertise to enable them to deliver a consistently high standard of teaching and learning throughout the school; it was evident from teaching and learning observed on the day of the validation that the leadership team actively promotes strengths in practice across the school.
- The development of very good links with other faiths and cultures; the children now have several opportunities to visit other faith communities and have a wonderful connection to a school in India, with which they correspond.

d) Summary of parents' views of the school

As part of the validation process parents were asked to complete a questionnaire on the Catholic life of the school. Altogether 54 replies were received and analysed.

Parents are extremely positive about St Mary's and it is clear that almost without exception, they are very happy with the quality of education that the school provides. All parents agreed that they were made to feel welcome at the school and that their children were happy attending. They felt that it was a caring and supportive Catholic community. All parents were happy with the RE work that went on in the school and felt that their children were making good progress in the subject. Parents felt that links with the local parish community of St Joseph's were strong and that when worship takes place in school, they were made to feel welcome to attend. A very small minority of parents felt that the school could keep them better informed about its programme for sex and relationship education.

THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION A1: The school community	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths identified by the school

- The Headteacher, RE manager, governors and parish priest work well together with the support of the Diocese to provide strong leadership for the school
- Catholic ethos evident in all areas of the school e.g. day to day practice by all members of the community and is reflective of the Mission Statement
- The school community has written a new Mission Statement which reflects our ethos and is more accessible to children
- The school's buildings and environment are maintained to a high standard (Green Flag) with excellent displays which reflect the school's Catholic nature
- The school is a very welcoming and richly diverse community where all children feel valued and cared for and members of the community are supportive of one another and contribute to the life of the school
- The new parents induction afternoon and parents into school events help to make them a part of the school community and familiar with the school's ethos
- Achievement of all is recognised and celebrated and is communicated to the whole community in various ways
- School, class and Eco councils have a positive impact on every aspect of the school life

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- To increase the opportunities in school to celebrate diversity

VALIDATORS' JUDGEMENT

SECTION A1: The school community	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths

Validators agree with the school's self-evaluation and commend the school for the following:

- The strength, warmth and supportive nature of relationships between all members of the school community.
- The genuine commitment of all members of the community to the Catholic life of the school.
- The new mission statement into which all members of the community have had an input; it is truly reflective of the life of the school.
- The excellent work of the Eco Council, which is held in high regard by the children of the school; it not only benefits the environment, but is developing a real understanding of nature and sustainability.

Areas identified for development

The validators agree with the area identified by the school and also recommend that they share their practice with others.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION A2: Leadership and management	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths identified by the school

- Senior leaders inspire the whole community through the Gospel values to live out the Mission Statement
- The strengths and achievements of all are promoted and celebrated
- Well planned and rigorous monitoring and a continuous drive to improve standards result in a highly developed strategic focus for development
- Governors make an increasing contribution through deeper, more focussed and planned involvement in the life of the school and provide challenge and support
- Thorough monitoring and evaluation provide a structure for well-targeted, high quality training to enhance the potential of all staff
- All involved in leadership ensure that stewardship is at the heart of all they do e.g. peer mediators
- “Leaders communicate high expectations and galvanise the enthusiasm of staff” Ofsted 2012
- All members of the school community are supported and enthused by the spirit of St Mary’s
- There is a strong and shared commitment to continually improve

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- To further develop and implement a programme to increase the involvement of the Governing body and support staff in the Catholic life of the school.

VALIDATORS’ JUDGEMENT

SECTION A2: Leadership and management	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths

Validators agree with the school’s self-evaluation and commend the school for the following:

- The Christian leadership offered by the school leadership team; their dedication and hard work are evident in the spirit and life of the school.
- The governing body, which is totally supportive of the school and which adds insight and a strong sense of vision to the leadership of the school.
- The role of the school council, which clearly has a voice; they felt very strongly that their views were considered and acted upon.

Areas identified for development

The validators agree with area identified by the school and in addition recommend that the school should continue to develop its work on assessment in RE, so that it can report more precisely on the overall provision and standards in the subject.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION A3: The wider community	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths identified by the school

- There is a strong commitment to charity work e.g. Mission Together, CAFOD, Hope Foundation – fund raising throughout the year, response to emergencies, eg natural disasters
- Good relationship with the Diocese and participation in events– visit by Bishop Crispian Dec. 2010
- Part of a strong and effective cluster of RC schools providing INSET and support at a diocesan and local level
- The school well regarded by the local community and is oversubscribed.
- Throughout the school pupils are positively encouraged to develop skills to use in the service of others
- Awarded the first Green Flag for Environmental Issues in Berkshire in 2008, second in 2010, third 2012
- Pro-active involvement with an Extended Schools cluster/Primary network/SSP benefits the whole community
- Wide variety of links developed with other faith groups
- Sponsorship and involvement from local higher education establishments (local and international), businesses and clubs e.g. Hitachi, Abbott, Zumba, Scottish Dancing
- Links with other communities and groups encourage awareness, understanding and knowledge of wider issues
- Involvement of community warden and setting up of a road crossing which benefits the whole community

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- Further extend links with the wider community especially with the parish of St Joseph's.

VALIDATORS' JUDGEMENT

SECTION A3: The wider community	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths

Validators agree with the school's self-evaluation and commend the school for the following:

- The strong commitment to charity work e.g. Mission Together, CAFOD and The Hope Foundation.
- The links with schools both locally and internationally; they offer opportunities, which enrich the learning of the whole school community.
- The school as a member of the diocesan family; pupils and staff participate in diocesan events and training.
- The mutually supportive links between school and parish.
- The support offered to the school by the parish priest; he is a regular visitor, knows the school well and is well-known by the children.
- The school's proactive involvement with local community events.

Areas identified for development

None other than that identified by the school.

CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION B1: Leadership and co-ordination of religious education	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths identified by the school

- RE Manager's subject knowledge, provision of training and support to staff, and the quality of monitoring and feedback are very good. Leadership is strong and ensures standards of RE are improving and that RE has the high profile it deserves.
- RE scheme of work 'God Matters' is fully embedded and developed further each year.
- RE has a high profile in the school, is valued and is recognised by all as a core subject and that is reflected in the various displays throughout the school and the 10% of curriculum time devoted to it.
- The School ensures time is devoted each year to RE INSET.
- The FGB informed by senior leaders and the RE governor ensures a high level of challenge and clear direction
- School Improvement Plan and Performance Management include challenging targets identified in the Diocesan Self Review.
- Teaching staff attend INSET provided by school, cluster and Diocese on a regular basis eg NQT programme.
- Parents regularly updated on RE topics through team letters and a termly parents leaflet.
- Collaborative planning promotes a wide variety of opportunities to develop stewardship eg Faith & Culture

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- To formalise and develop support for new staff regarding curriculum RE

VALIDATORS' JUDGEMENT

SECTION B1: Leadership and co-ordination of religious education	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths

Validators agree with the school's self-evaluation and commend the school for the following:

- The hard work and commitment of the RE manager, who leads by example and whose support of colleagues has greatly impacted on the Catholic life of the school.
- The strong commitment of the RE manager to developing the subject; there is a shared vision of the importance of RE in the school.
- The high profile of RE in the school, as reflected in displays and prayer corners; they reflect the liturgical season or RE topic and contribute to the quality of learning and spiritual development.
- The monitoring systems in place to ensure continuing improvement and developments in RE.
- The quality of staff development, which has clearly impacted on the standard of pupils' learning in RE.

Areas identified for development

None other than that identified by the school.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION B2: Attainment and progress in religious education	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
		✓		

Key strengths identified by the school

- Pupils make good progress and develop a wide range of skills as seen through monitoring
- Excellent relationships within and beyond the classroom enhance learning
- Pupils demonstrate enthusiasm for and enjoyment of RE in all year groups resulting in a desire to produce work of a high standard.
- More focused teaching of theology is possible due to the embedment of the 'God Matters' programme.
- Faith and Culture week enables a concentrated approach and exploration of Other Faiths.
- Collaborative planning ensures consistency and dissemination of good practice within and between teams.
- Displays are used well to stimulate discussion and learning and marking is used as a tool to promote further learning.
- A variety of learning activities together with support in lessons to ensure full access to all pupils producing high standards in RE which match those in other core subjects
- AfL is embedded in practice throughout the school, informing planning and ensuring continued challenge

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- Embed the link between planning and assessment.

VALIDATORS' JUDGEMENT

SECTION B2: Attainment and progress in religious education	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths

Validators judge attainment and progress in religious education to be outstanding for the following reasons:

- The outstanding attitudes to learning; in lessons observed, children participated with confidence and were able to make connections with prior learning.
- The children's ability to articulate their previous knowledge and understanding in RE.
- The work in children's books, which demonstrated appropriate attainment and progress across the school and which was of a similar standard to that of other core subjects.
- The quality of teacher's marking and the children's response to marking, which creates a dialogue of learning between pupils and teachers.
- The quality of support provided by the teaching assistants, whose work enhanced children's progress and attainment.

Areas identified for development

None other than that identified by the school.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION B3: Quality of teaching	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
		✓		

Key strengths identified by the school

- A variety of teaching styles are adopted by the teachers in order to meet all learning styles and enhance the engagement of the children with the subject matter.
- A range of activities, well differentiated, are planned to promote interest and enthusiasm.
- Greater use of other subjects e.g. Art, Music, ICT, PSHE have strengthened cross curricular links and skills learned in those subjects have been transferred.
- A range of methods enable staff and pupils to identify next steps.
- A consistently high standard of teaching is achieved through staff modelling, sharing good practice and peer observation and results in very good progress.
- RE INSET is delivered regularly resulting in good subject knowledge of the staff.
- Assessment informs planning and, together with effective deployment of other adults, supports learning
- A wide range of good quality resources and displays are used to enhance teaching and learning.
- RE is monitored regularly through lesson observations, book scrutinies, pupil conferencing
- Joint planning ensures consistency and high standards

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- To ensure pupils are challenged and there is effective support and intervention offered by other adults within the classroom

VALIDATORS' JUDGEMENT

SECTION B3: Quality of teaching	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths

Validators judge attainment and progress in religious education to be outstanding for the following reasons:

- Children's responses during RE lessons. In lessons observed during the validation, children were clearly able to articulate their prior knowledge and understanding of Scripture; they demonstrated an excellent understanding of RE themes and how the learning related to their own lives.
- The progress and attainment in children's books, which demonstrated teaching to be outstanding over time.
- The commitment of all staff to the development of their own subject knowledge which, in lessons observed, greatly enhanced children's learning.

Areas identified for development

In addition to the area identified by the school, the validators recommend that the school should develop more opportunities for children to be active in their learning.

SPIRITUAL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION C1: Spiritual development	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths identified by the school

- Prayer and worship are integral in the daily life of the School and there are excellent quality prayer areas in every classroom. The automatic response in times of sadness and joy is to turn to God to ask for help or to offer thanks.
- Masses, Reconciliation, liturgies and contemplation provide opportunities for enrichment for all.
- Regular visits to the Parish for Mass and an annual retreat is held for children in years 2 and 6 contributing to the spiritual development of pupils.
- The use of Scripture and stimulating, high quality resources used effectively contribute to a sense of the sacred
- Staff and children are encouraged to lead and actively contribute in collective and individual acts of worship, parents and governors participate during regular visits.
- Year 6 lead the school through an examination of the events of the Triduum through their performance of a Passion play. Stations of the Cross are marked each Friday during Lent by the whole school.
- Pupils are encouraged to think of the needs of others and are enthusiastic in their response to others.
- The parish priest provides regular support for spiritual development through liturgical celebrations during the year
- Through our integrated curriculum especially through science, PCHSE adults and children recognise God around us and His impact on the wider world, fostering awe and wonder and developing their social conscience.

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- Develop the involvement of other community groups in spiritual development on a regular basis

VALIDATORS' JUDGEMENT

SECTION C1: Spiritual development	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths

Validators agree with the school's self-evaluation and commend the school for the following:

- The evidence of spirituality across the school and the importance given by the leadership team to its development.
- The weekly opportunity for staff collective worship.
- The acts of worship observed during the validation; they were of a high quality, were purposeful and the children engaged reverently in prayer and discussion.
- The attractive prayer focal points found in every classroom and the opportunity provided for prayer through class worship.
- The creative development and use of the school grounds (including the eco area and grotto), which add to opportunities to promote spirituality.
- The way in which pupils' interactions with adults were positively reinforced; their questions and comments were valued and time given for development of their own thoughts and ideas.

Areas identified for development

None other than that identified by the school.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION C2: Moral development	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths identified by the school

- The Mission Statement is lived out by the community and underpins the moral development of pupils being celebrated through a weekly stewardship award
- Pupils moral development is strongly supported through RE, worship and the wider curriculum
- The staff provide very good pastoral care, guidance and support including the use of SEAL and offer nurture groups to support a number of children throughout the school in the form of ELSA and SPA interventions
- Achievement relating to both academic work and behaviour is celebrated.
- Adults and older children model good behaviour and promote positive relationships.
- Opportunities including P4C are used to enable children to discuss issues, develop thinking skills and form opinions based on their beliefs and values.
- Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and demonstrate good attitudes to work and each other recognising and valuing difference.
- Behaviour is excellent and expectations high, issues are dealt with fairly and pupils are given an opportunity for reconciliation in a variety of ways eg through Peer Mediation.
- The Year 6 children provide good role models for the younger children e.g. Infant Buddies

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- To support parents in promoting positive behaviour management at home

VALIDATORS' JUDGEMENT

SECTION C2: Moral development	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths

Validators agree with the school's self-evaluation and commend the school for the following:

- The outstanding behaviour observed during the validation, which was endorsed by the views of governors and parents.
- The high regard in which the children value the impact of peer mediators; they articulated very clearly the positive impact this has on relationships.
- The excellent role model provided by adults; their work ethic and the respect and care shown for the children and the school environment.

Areas identified for development

None other than that identified by the school.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR THE VALIDATION

As part of the validation process:

- Two validators spent a morning in school meeting with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and parish priest discussing the school's self-review report, touring the school and gathering evidence.
- Two validators carried out the validation in the course of a school day.
- During the validation day, interviews and discussions were held with:
 - The headteacher
 - The deputy headteacher/RE manager
 - Governors of the school
 - The school council
 - The Eco Council
- Four religious education lessons were observed.
- Two acts of collective worship were observed.
- A sample of pupils' RE and English books, covering all abilities, was scrutinised.
- Prior to and during the validation, documentation was analysed and evidence files examined.
- An analysis was made of the responses to the parental questionnaire.
- Feedback was given to the headteacher, the RE manager and members of the governing body.

CONCLUSION

The validators would like to thank the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, staff, governors, the parish priest, parents and pupils of St Mary's Catholic Primary School for their comprehensive preparatory work for the validation. They would also like to express their appreciation for the warmth of welcome they received and the support given during the validation.