



DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark

URN 118757

St Edward's Catholic Primary School
New Road
Sheerness
Kent ME12 1BW

Inspection date: 22 /11/ 2016

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DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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Introduction

Description of the school

St Edward's Catholic Primary School is situated in the Chatham Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is an academy within the Kent Catholic Partnership (KCSP) Multi Academy Trust (MAT). The principal parish which the school serves is Saints Henry and Elizabeth, Sheppey. The school is one form entry and takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 23%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in all Key Stages. The number of pupils currently on roll is 202. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is below average. The proportion of pupils who receive extra support in class is above average. Most pupils are of white British and European heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) is similar to that of most primary schools.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

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St Edward's is a rapidly improving school with many good aspects. There is a clear vision and determination amongst leaders and managers to become a good school once the recently upgraded policies and procedures are embedded. The Catholic ethos of the school is very evident. Gospel values are central to the provision for pupil's spiritual, moral, social and emotional development. The level of pastoral care, nurture and support which pupils receive is excellent. The school gives high priority to inclusivity, which is a model of Christian values, thus meeting the needs of its diverse community. Pupils are happy, proud of their school, respectful and polite. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and cite that "The right team is in place to bring the best out of the children," "Staff are welcoming, friendly and hardworking" and "do an excellent job in giving children great morals in line with Catholic teaching." The school is sensitive to the needs and perceptions of pupils from other faiths and cultures so that they participate fully in all aspects of school life.

Areas for development cited in the previous inspection relating to its Catholic identity and the prayer life of the school have been successfully addressed. As a result, the distinctive Catholic atmosphere throughout the school is now excellent. Creative, interactive displays proclaim the Church's mission and the prayer life of the school is now exceptionally good with areas for further development accurately identified.

The school self-evaluation is honest and the Headteacher and leadership team have correctly identified areas for further improvement relating to teaching and learning.

Governance of the school requires improvement. The governors need to become more active, positive, rigorous and systematic in evaluating and monitoring the Catholic life of the school.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- The Governing body needs to be more accountable in promoting, evaluating and monitoring the Catholic life of the School
- Continue to improve teaching and learning for all levels of ability so that all lessons are good or better and ensure that the curriculum provides challenges for the more able
- Undertake a review of the mission statement, with the aim of creating a mission statement understood by all.

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school

St Edward's has a strong Catholic identity. It provides many and varied opportunities for pupils to develop their faith. Pupils value and respect others. They understand the importance of caring for each other. Pupils understand that religious beliefs and moral values are important within the school community. They view their Catholic school as a place where they "learn to care, trust, forgive and be forgiven". This view was supported by comments from parents who cite that "the school is excellent in providing children and families opportunities for moral and spiritual development and as a result this is reflected in our children's sense of self-worth."

Pupils are happy to uphold the school's code of behaviour. They convey a sense of pride in their environment and are respectful and welcoming. They appreciate the opportunities that they are afforded to engage with people in the local community such as involvement at the Remembrance Service where they presented a wreath and the monthly commitment by older pupils who sing and chat to people who suffer from dementia at the local care home.

Members of the School Council stated how much they appreciated having a voice and that their role was to help make the school a "place where it is fun to learn and fun to play." Although the demeanour of pupils convey that they live out the school's mission, they are not fully conversant with the wording of the mission statement.

The school is very active in alerting its pupils to the needs of the less fortunate in society. Pupils benefit as a result in that they gain experience in showing mercy and engaging in fundraising events to support charities such as CAFOD, Demelza House and Mission Together.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

Given that pupil attainment on the point of entry to school is very low, standards and achievements are good in that they are in line with attainment in literacy in both key stages. However, these standards still fall short of national expectations. The school has established strategies to address this and is currently focusing with due diligence on raising literacy levels across the school. This is already having a positive impact on attainment in Religious Education as the work being produced is of a higher quality.

Pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons. They are responsive when listening to their teachers' and answer questions with confidence showing that they can relate learning to personal experience. For example, Year 6 pupils engaged with sincerity and empathy as they explored the theme of 'Expectations' in the light of Gospel readings relating to Advent. Pupils in Year 3 can use age appropriate Bibles to look up stories from the Old Testament when learning about the significance of the Jesse Tree.

Scrutiny of books demonstrates that, in general, pupils take pride in their work and can relate their learning to personal experience. The pupils' engagement could be raised to a higher level if learning tasks were more focused on the doctrinal and scripture elements of topics and teachers would then be able to assess attainment levels more accurately. The

pace of lessons is too often curtailed by over exuberance and lack of self-discipline by some pupils when working in groups or pairs and this needs to be addressed. The further improvement of developmental marking and getting the pupils more involved in self-assessment would further enhance pupil engagement and achievement.

Teaching Assistants throughout the school make a huge contribution to the manner in which pupils with learning needs achieve and enjoy their lessons. They are well trained and ensure that pupils are fully engaged with learning intentions during lessons.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

Acts of Collective Worship engage pupils' interest. They are keen to participate and state how much they enjoy their class assemblies and appreciate that fact that their parents are invited to share in the experience. Pupils respond in a reverential manner to music, sign language and joyful hymn singing and this enhances the spiritual dimension of their prayer. The school is fully inclusive and no one is expected to act in a manner that is contrary to their beliefs. The group of pupils interviewed stated that pupils who are not Catholic are "encouraged to pray in their own way."

Pupils appreciate the contribution made by the Parish Priest in helping them 'learn about the celebration of the Mass'.

Child friendly prayer focal areas in classrooms help pupils to engage with prayer on a personal level as they are invited to write and share their petitions. Parents are involved in the pupils' prayer life and help their children with a range of activities including learning scripts and helping them to prepare their Easter Gardens. Each week in each class a pupil is invited to compose a contemplative prayer, poem or thought with their family. They are then invited to share their prayers in class and these are subsequently placed in the Class Prayer Book. Older pupils said they feel very proud of the fact that they are the 'authors' of the St Edward's School Prayer.

The celebration of the Mass is central to the pupils' experience of Collective Worship. Class Mass and whole school Mass are regular features. Pupils are involved in preparing these celebrations, actively participating in liturgies and bidding prayers.

The quality of Collective Worship is greatly enhanced by the input of the parish Priest. His support and guidance is appreciated by staff, parents and pupils.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

Following a turbulent four years of changes in leadership and management a new and positive era is emerging at St Edwards. The strong leadership from the Headteacher and Senior Management Team is making a positive impact, implementing improvement and outcomes for pupils. The shoots of new growth that have been planted by this relatively new team are coming to fruition. Leaders and governors demonstrate a commitment to the Church's mission with the moral, spiritual, social and cultural development of every pupil given due priority.

Issues raised in the previous inspection relating to the Catholic life of the school have been rigorously addressed. The school is distinctively Catholic in its welcoming ambiance with vibrant, interactive displays and religious artefacts depicting Gospel values. The prayer life of the school has undergone significant development and pupils at the school now have the opportunity to be part of a worshipping community that is child-centred and meaningful. Credit for this is due, in no small part, to the commitment of the Headteacher and her hard working leadership team to foster and develop the school's long established ethos. Together, they have undertaken a soul-searching evaluation, which has identified areas for development and are now implementing policies and procedures in a methodical manner.

Governors are regular visitors. However, they now need to be more pro-active in supporting and evaluating leaders and managers. They also need to undertake a more rigorous approach as critical friends to monitor and evaluate the impact of targets as set out in the school improvement plan. Recruitment of Catholic staff is a cause of concern and governors need to establish a long-term strategy to counteract this.

Currently the school has a mission Statement, a motto: 'To work is to Pray' and a catch phrase: 'Dare to be Excellent', as a result the pupils are confused. In the light of this, one clear Mission Statement needs to be created with all stakeholders involved in the process.

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils

Since the previous inspection, leadership changes have had an impact on the development of Religious Education as a subject. Due to the hard work and commitment of the newly appointed Religious Education Leader all aspects of the subject are back on track. Religious Education is given priority as a core subject. The improvement plan for the subject is comprehensive, showing clear targets for on-going development. It would be beneficial, if these targets were also included in the School Development Plan so that governors could monitor their impact on the provision.

Currently, the school has only one Catholic member of staff who works for four days each week. To support this serious shortfall in staffing, governors and leaders have undertaken a training programme for their Catholic Teaching Assistants that is reaping benefits for pupils and staff in delivering the Religious Education syllabus. Governors need to evaluate and monitor this provision on a regular basis.

Staff receive on-going support and training from the Diocesan Advisor and Religious Education Leader to implement the curriculum. A programme to monitor teaching performance through lesson observations and book scrutiny is in place and this is beginning to have an impact on raising standards. More guidance is required for some teachers so that teaching gets to the Catholic core of topics rather than dwelling unduly on the Humanist aspects. Leaders have identified the need to address this with further training being planned. The emphasis the school is currently placing on raising literacy standards will also help pupils accomplish higher levels of attainment.

The assessment process is developing. Plans are in place to compile a portfolio of assessed work that is levelled against national standards. Leaders have also liaised with fellow subject leaders within the Deanery to share moderation exercises and expertise and this will serve to improve provision for pupils.

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The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

Overall, the quality of teaching ranges from good with outstanding elements to those requiring improvement. Purposeful learning was seen in a Year 6 class where there was a detailed lesson plan outlining targets; timed tasks were set to reinforce learning; a spiritual dimension was incorporated offering pupils time to reflect; behaviour was well managed and pupils made progress. This format needs to be emulated throughout the school. Where teaching was less effective, pace and activities needed to be more structured, learning intentions and key words made more explicit as well as a need for better management of pupils who strayed off task. Leaders have identified, through their monitoring exercises, that good teaching and its impact on learning continue to be an area for further development.

Evidence from the lessons observed and scrutiny of pupils' books reveal that there is a shortfall in the level of expectation for high achievers who are not sufficiently challenged. As this was an issue raised in the previous inspection (2013), it must now be addressed.

Working relationships between teaching assistants and pupils who require support is very effective throughout.

The Assessable Resourced and Child Centred (ARC) provision, which gives extra nurture for some pupils, is outstanding. This facility has excellent cross-curricular links with Religious Education and pupils make great progress in their understanding and learning as a result. Their work portfolio is an outstanding record of their high levels of attainment.

Currently, it is difficult to ascertain from pupils' books at what level of attainment they are working. Teaching and learning throughout the school will benefit greatly when the portfolio of assessed work is upgraded to reflect national rather than school based standards.

There is scope for improvement in the marking of pupils' books, which is mainly affirmative with an over emphasis on literacy skills. There is evidence of dialogue that challenges thinking in some classes and this practice needs to become a feature throughout the school.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning

The Religious Education programme 'Come and See,' together with the correct allocation of time for teaching Religious Education, meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. The implementation of the curriculum requires improvement in some classes where there is an over emphasis on a Humanist element. The curriculum on offer is not sufficiently challenging for the more able, and as this is an issue raised in the previous inspection, it is imperative that it is now addressed.

The Subject Leader ensures that cross-curricular links supporting the pupils' spiritual and moral development are in place. The orderly, vibrant, well-resourced learning environment in classrooms serves to enhance provision. Displays and photographs reflect pupils'

engagement with the subject. Cross-curricular links such as ICT, art, music and drama bring an added dimension to the curriculum.

The attention given to the celebration of the major events in the liturgical calendar serve to enrich provision. Provision is also greatly enhanced by links with the local parish church and pupils benefit from the range of opportunities they are offered to be part of a worshipping community. Each 'House' has a saint's name and plans are in place to celebrate their feast days with assemblies and prayer. This innovation will further enhance provision.

The programme to teach pupils about the major World Faiths is in line with Diocesan guidelines.

The Relationship & Sex Education policy has been reviewed in Sept 2016 and is in line with Diocesan guidelines.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

The quality of Collective Worship is good. Opportunities for prayer and reflection offer pupils a positive liturgical experience. Planning is comprehensive and linked to the liturgical calendar and the Religious Education syllabus. Acts of Worship, such as the assembly attend by inspectors, focus on gathering in a reverential manner, listening to scripture reading with pupils encouraged to actively participate through questioning, prayer and song. The pupils are taught sign language and it was a joy to see some Year 3 pupils using Makaton as they led the hymn 'Peace, Perfect Peace.'

The programme for Collective Worship is monitored by the Religious Education Leader in a methodical manner and outcomes are incorporated into planning. The quiet reflection area in the main hall is thoughtfully organised and plans are proposed to create a further quiet reflection area as this will serve to enhance the spiritual dimension of prayer. The 'Wednesday Word' is incorporated weekly into assemblies thereby giving pupils an understanding of the Sunday Gospel message.

The programme for Masses is very good. Pupils have a range of opportunities to prepare and lead liturgies for Masses in school and in the parish at regular intervals in the school Year. Pupils interviewed, cited how much they appreciate the input of the Parish Priest in helping them understand the components of the Mass. They also stated that they enjoyed being altar servers in the parish and participating in the Christingle Service during Advent.

The Parish Priest makes a significant contribution to the prayer life of the school through supporting staff, leading liturgies and his input is greatly appreciated by parents and staff. All pupils are invited to participate in acts of Collective Worship and no pupil is expected to practice any aspect that is contrary to his/her beliefs.

The 'Liturgy Group' has a positive impact on provision as some Catholic pupils join the Religious Education Leader each week to prepare readings in advance of assemblies and liturgies.