

DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH VALIDATION REPORT



St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Newport Road, Newbury, RG14 2AW

URN 110094
 Date of previous validation July 2011
Date of this validation date 28th April 2016

Overall effectiveness	Previous validation:	Good
	This validation:	Good

The school community:	Good	Attainment and progress in RE:	Good
The wider community:	Good	Quality of teaching in RE:	Good
Spiritual development:	Good	Leadership and management of RE:	Good
Moral development:	Outstanding	Leadership and management:	Good

This is a good school.

- St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School is a school that works hard to 'follow Jesus, recognise the Holy Spirit and nurture gifts'. The mission statement is well known and all in the community do their very best to live it out on a daily basis.
- There is a strong sense of welcome from the moment you step over the threshold and very good relationships exist between all members of the community. New families are warmly welcomed into the school.
- The transformational leadership of the headteacher and the personal witness to the faith by the senior leadership team provide a strong vision and direction for the work of the school. The school leadership, including governors, are fully committed in their drive to further develop the Catholic life of the school.
- Teaching and learning in RE are good. Evidence from books and the lessons observed show that children are making secure progress and reaching good standards. Pupils enjoy the subject and appreciate how it can help them in their daily lives.
- The school benefits from very strong links with the Reading schools in the local cluster. This includes support and advice, regular moderation and opportunities to celebrate together.
- The school provides a range of good quality worship, led by adults and children, which allows individual and collective members of the school community to express their relationship with one another and with God, in a reflective and prayerful manner.
- Staff and children act as witnesses to their faith, through their support of one another and their support for local, national and international charities.
- The children in the school demonstrate outstanding respect, behaviour and Christian attitudes in their relationships, with a clear sense of right and wrong.
- The links with the local parishes are good and continually developing.
- Parents' views of the school are very positive. A very large majority of those responding to the pre-validation survey were complimentary about all aspects of school life.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

In order to continue to move forward, the school should consider the following:

- Ensure the best practise seen in the teaching of RE is consistently applied across the school, with particular reference to the appropriateness of tasks and marking.
- Ensure the two year cycle of planning provides sufficient challenge in year two of the cycle.
- Extend the work already begun on enabling pupils to prepare and lead collective worship.

Full Report

The school as a Catholic community

The school community: Good

The wider community: Good

- The school's mission statement, 'to educate our children by: following, recognising and nurturing', can be seen being lived out in the interactions between all members of the school community. Its impact can also be seen in the warmth of the welcome received by visitors and the commitment towards supporting those in need. The children talked about St. Joseph's as 'a school where if you are sad you can go to anyone and they will reassure you.'
- There is a strong sense of welcome from the moment you step over the threshold and very good relationships exist between all members of the community.
- The school benefits from very strong links with the local cluster of schools, particularly those in the Reading area. This includes support, advice, moderation arrangements and opportunities for celebration.
- Members of the school community demonstrate their commitment to the principles of stewardship, through their support of many local, national and international initiatives, including CAFOD and Loose Ends, a local charity for the homeless and those in need.
- Parish links are good, with members of the parish offering support to the school. Governors and the headteacher promote the school in the parish, through speaking at Mass and displays. The school is aware of the need to develop these links further.
- The school communicates well with parents and has thorough induction arrangements that have been well received by parents. Parents are given regular opportunities to visit and participate in the life of the school. The International Day was a particular success in celebrating the growing diversity of the school community.

Curriculum religious education

Attainment and progress: Good

Quality of teaching: Good

Leadership and management of RE: Good

- The evidence in the pupils' books, the good quality teaching seen on the day and discussions with pupils all combine to show that attainment and progress in RE are good overall, although further work is needed to ensure consistency across the school.
- In the lessons observed as part of the validation children were engaged in a variety of tasks that enabled them to show a high level of understanding of the Easter story and were able to make links between the symbols used at a funeral and eternal life.
- In lessons observed the support of the teaching assistants was well planned for, enabling children of all abilities to be well supported and to make good progress.
- Through a scrutiny of the work in the pupils' RE books, evidence was seen of a range of activities that enabled the children to demonstrate what they had learnt; however, this is not consistent across all classes and in some cases tasks are overly literacy-focused.
- The school is developing its planning and assessment in RE by focussing more closely on the national levels of attainment; this will help to improve standards further. Planning needs to consistently provide opportunities for more focussed and challenging tasks.
- Over the course of the year, improvements can be seen in the quality of marking and in response to the more recent RE activities, there is some evidence of teachers' marking both affirming and using key questions to move learning forward in RE.
- Quality interactive displays support and challenge the children's understanding in RE.
- The RE subject leader, who is passionate about the subject, is very effective in his monitoring of standards in RE, through observing teaching, pupil conferencing, work sampling and some

cross-moderating of levels of attainment. Outcomes of his monitoring are reported to governors through the headteacher's report.

- The school needs to consider how outstanding practice in the school can be shared effectively to further raise standards in the subject.

Spiritual and moral development

Spiritual development:

Good

Moral development:

Outstanding

- The school provides a range of good quality worship, which allows individual and collective members of the school community to express their relationship with one another and with God in a reflective and prayerful manner. The children said 'we are lucky because our headteacher encourages prayer.' The school embraces opportunities to nurture spirituality and give Christian witness; these include:
 - Special services or focal points to mark the liturgical year, for example, Advent prayer spaces and May as the month of Mary liturgy.
 - The lunchtime Jaffa Club and year 6 activities run by COINS, a local Christian group. These have proved popular with the children.
 - The development of a room for reflection and outside space for prayer.
 - A Sunday Gospel-based display that the children respond to.
 - Staff/governor days of reflection and sharing of responsibility to lead prayers.
- A start has been made on providing opportunities for the children to take a greater role in planning and leading collective worship. This practice tends to be limited to the house captains; thought should be given to training younger pupils in planning and leading on an increasing number of elements within an act of worship.
- In the worship we joined on the day the children helped all those present to reflect on trusting in God, through appropriate readings, images and child friendly songs, sung with great joy and dance performed with great enthusiasm and reverence.
- The children in the school demonstrate outstanding respect, behaviour and Christian attitudes in their relationships, with a clear sense of right and wrong. Key factors promoting this include:
 - The linking of the mission statement to the Diamond Awards. The children spoken to were very confident in articulating which element of the mission statement they were witnessing to when receiving any reward.
 - The good Christian role models provided by the staff and older children in the school.
 - The systematic linking of Gospel values to British values and school life.
 - The children's own initiative in developing reward systems to address any issues.
- The celebration of achievement positively promotes pupil self-esteem and confidence. The children are rewarded for good behaviour and successes are celebrated in a variety of ways.
- Groups of pupils take on key responsibilities throughout the school, including house captains, sitting on the school council, form captains, eco warriors, librarians and year 6 buddies.

Leadership and management:

Good

- School leaders provide a good model of Christian leadership, where all members of the school are valued. They inspire the community to share in a strong sense of vision and mission.
- The governing body is a strong supporter of the school. The leadership in the school are fully committed in their drive to bring about improvements and to embed recent initiatives, whilst trying to protect the work life balance of staff.
- The opportunities given to the pupils to take on leadership positions in the school.
- Progress has been made on the issues identified for improvement in the last validation and monitoring visit, particularly in beginning to develop greater consistency in differentiation, marking and presentation, although this still needs to be developed further.

School details

Name of school	St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll:	210
Chair of Governors:	Sinead Hall
Headteacher:	Nicola McVeigh

St Joseph's is an average-sized primary school, situated in an urban environment, close to the town centre of Newbury. The school occupies a large site and is in close walking distance of the parish church and presbytery of St Joseph's. It is part of the diocesan pastoral area of West Berkshire and principally serves the Catholic parishes of St Joseph's, (Newbury), St. Francis de Sales, (Wash Common), Our Lady of Lourdes, (Hungerford) and The Sacred Heart, (Lambourn).

Most pupils are either Catholic (52%) or fellow-Christian (31%). The number of Catholic children attending the school has increased over the past three years. The majority of the staff are not Catholic. The number of children with special educational needs and the number of children in receipt of free school meals are below the national average. The number of children with English as a second language is increasing.

Information about this validation

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.

Validation Team

Catherine Hobbs	Lead validator
Helena Pickering	Assistant validator

Activities Carried Out as Part of the Validation

- Ethos walk.
- Discussion on the school's self-evaluation sheets.
- Discussions with various members of the school community.
- Observations of collective worship.
- Observations of teaching and learning in RE, including joint observations with members of the school leadership team.
- Pupil work scrutiny.
- Feedback of key findings.

Conclusion

The validators would like to thank the headteacher, deputy headteacher, RE leader, staff, governors, parents and pupils of St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School for their preparatory work for the validation, which forms part of the school's regular self-review cycle. They would also like to express their appreciation for the warmth of welcome they received and the support given during the validation process.