

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



**INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL
CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

**ST PETER'S VOLUNTARY AIDED
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Prospect Road, Marlow, SL7 2PJ**

DCSF School No 825/3371

URN: 110473

Head Teacher: Miss A McCluskey

Chair of Governors: Mr A Temple

Reporting Inspector: Mr B O'Byrne

Date of Inspection: 25th November 2009

Date Report Issued: 5th January 2010

Date of previous Inspection: 31st January 2007

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and
in partnership with Buckinghamshire Local Authority

Description of school

St Peter's Catholic school is a one form entry primary school with 205 children on roll. It mainly serves the parish of St Peter's in Marlow, with 23 children coming from the parish of St Dunstan's in Bourne End. Over ninety per cent of the children are Catholic. The majority of children are of white British heritage. There are no children eligible for free school meals. There is one looked after child and fifteen children on the Special Educational Needs register including three with statements. Seven children speak English as an additional language. When children enter the school their skills and abilities are generally above the national average. Almost all the permanent teaching staff are Catholics. Five teachers have the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS) or equivalent.

.Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Satisfactory 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 3

St Peter's is a satisfactory school with many good and outstanding features. The school makes good provision for prayer, worship and religious education [RE]. Attainment in RE is good and children make satisfactory progress during their time at the school. During the inspection teaching ranged between satisfactory and outstanding with most teaching judged to be good or better. RE is at the heart of the curriculum and is generally well planned and monitored. The behaviour of the children is excellent. Parents are supportive of the school and most would be pleased to recommend the school to others. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very well addressed through RE with contributions from other curriculum areas. The head teacher shows leadership of the school and is supported by dedicated staff and governors. The children are happy to attend and feel valued and secure. They participate in the life of the school in many ways including through the school council. However, there are areas for improvement which need to be addressed, some as a matter of urgency.

Improvements since the last inspection

Grade 3

The last inspection highlighted three areas for improvements. These were, firstly, to continue with the planned review of the school mission statement ensuring that children understand it and play their part in putting it into practice. Secondly, to continue evaluating the curriculum and other areas of school life so as to further extend opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils and, thirdly, to ensure that marking consistently informs pupil improvement. The first area needs to be prioritised. The second has been addressed, though further development is still possible and the third area requires positive action to ensure that marking in RE is consistent throughout the school. Since the last inspection the foundation stage has developed an attractive outside area for reflection and prayer.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

Grade 3

The school has satisfactory capacity to improve. The headteacher and staff are committed, dedicated and hard working. The governors pay regular visits to the school but need to make more impact in their role as critical friend. A clear understanding of how the community perceives its mission is needed in order to better define the school's direction.

What the school should do to improve further

In order to improve further, the school should:

- review as a priority the school's mission statement, involving all members of the community in the process
- further develop assessment procedures to ensure their greater impact on pupil learning

- ensure consistency and thoroughness of RE marking in line with whole school policy and best practice to enhance pupil learning.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

Leadership and management of the Catholic life of St Peter's is satisfactory. The head teacher is dedicated and committed to the school and is a respected leader. She is supported by an efficient staff, including a hard working and very efficient RE co-ordinator. The governing body is extremely supportive of the school but need to be more pro-active in fulfilling their monitoring and challenging role. Careful consideration should be given to the leadership's impact on ensuring continual improvement to the quality of religious education in the school.

The prayer life of the school

Grade 2

Children are provided with many opportunities to develop in the understanding and growth of their faith. Prayer and worship are integral to the life of the school. Policies for prayer and liturgy form part of the religious education documentation and the class assemblies witnessed during the inspection were good. Each class has a prominent religious focal point with table coverings reflecting the liturgical season and age appropriate bibles, artefacts and pictures. The school day starts and ends with prayers and all staff meetings start with prayers. Prayer groups are also organised for the children by their teachers during the months of May and October. There is a weekly mass in the school and mass on other important occasions, prepared by the children working with their teachers. Parents and carers are encouraged to attend masses, assemblies and liturgies and a number do so. Once a year, on the feast of Candlemass, the parish priest conducts a service to bless the candles that will be used in school and class assemblies throughout the year. A highlight of the year is the annual mass and activities to celebrate the school's feast day of St Peter and Paul.

Chaplaincy

Grade 2

Chaplaincy provision is good and effectively planned by a well established team. The team lead many non-sacramental liturgies such as services in advent and the distribution of ashes in Lent. The school works with the parish in a variety of ways including preparation for the sacraments. The parish priest, who is also a foundation governor, is a frequent and supportive visitor and his input is much valued by the school. Several members of staff have trained as Rainbows facilitators. All members of staff recognise their role in the promotion of the religious life of the school.

Community cohesion

Grade 1

The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding. It is fully involved in the community where it is situated. St Peter's joins with other faith schools and Christian churches in Marlow for "Praise in the Park" and "Hope in the Park" and also prepares presentations in the local parish. The school raises large sums of money for various charities both locally, nationally and overseas and encourages the children to buy Fair Trade items especially through contacts in Uganda. St Peter's is part of the Buckingham Catholic Schools' Partnership and also works with other community schools in the locality. The school supports "Mission Together" and parents and staff are on a rota to provide sandwiches to the homeless in London. Children, staff and parents also help with the organization of the parish Christmas and summer fairs and run various stalls at these events. Many other groups and visitors are welcomed into St Peter's. The school works closely with St Mary's University College, Strawberry Hill, assisting their work with the initial teacher training of students. At the time of the inspection three students were working in the school.

Achievement and standards in Religious Education

Grade 3

Attainment on entry to the school is above average and this is enhanced by good teaching at foundation level. Progress in RE is satisfactory as the children move through the key stages. During the inspection the children displayed a good level of religious knowledge. Behaviour is outstanding and children show respect for each other and themselves. The school has introduced a "Buddy" system where older children care for new arrivals and younger children and help keep them safe at playtimes. St Peter's provides a very good environment for social

and moral education. The school needs to place more emphasis on the development of systems in RE but has, with guidance, the capacity to improve.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in religious education is good overall. Lessons observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Questioning techniques are generally good and provide a good level of challenge. Children were observed engaged in a variety of tasks to which most responded well. In one class a very imaginative dance routine reinforced the message of a biblical text that was presented to the children. Standards of work in the children's books are satisfactory overall, although there are inconsistencies in marking. Only limited evidence of differentiated work was observed during the inspection either to assist slow learners or stretch the more able and little use was made of technology. In the questionnaire, parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the RE provided by the school and the good level of communication offered by all members of staff. One parent, typical of many, commented "The school is calm and conducive to learning. The children's spiritual and emotional needs are being met in a loving and supportive environment".

Quality of the Religious Education curriculum

Grade 2

Overall, the quality of the curriculum is good. At least 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education which follows the 'Here I Am' programme. Staff work very hard to ensure the subject has a high priority. Planning overall is good and the curriculum supports the personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children. Staff are encouraged to, and do, attend available training arranged by the Diocese and other professional bodies. However, further work is required to develop good practice in the assessment of RE across the school.

Leadership and management of Religious Education

Grade 3

Leadership and management of RE is satisfactory. The head teacher gives RE a high priority and works very hard to promote high standards. Staff new to the school receive good quality support. The subject co-ordinator, who is very capable and dedicated, works with the head teacher to monitoring the teaching and planning of religious education. Reporting procedures are in place and the school has introduced a system of assessment based on the national RE levels of attainment. Systems and procedures need embedding in practice to impact more fully on individual pupil progress.