

DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH VALIDATION REPORT



St John's Cathedral Catholic Primary School, Portsmouth

Cottage View, Landport, Portsmouth, PO1 1PX

Validation dates 3 and 28 February 2014

Overall effectiveness: Good with outstanding features

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

This is a good school.

- St John's Cathedral Primary School is a vibrant, welcoming and loving community of faith, with a real commitment to living out its mission of 'Love to learn and learn to love'.
- All in the school strive to do their best for all in their community – academically, pastorally and spiritually.
- St John's is a school that knows itself well. The leadership team and governing body have put in place a comprehensive and effective system of self-evaluation. Strengths are recognised and celebrated and any areas for development that are identified are quickly addressed.
- The vision, leadership, dedication and role model of the executive headteacher are key strengths of the school.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. An overwhelming majority was positive about all aspects of school life.
- The good progress made by pupils in religious education (RE) is underpinned by planning and activities that allow them to explore the messages of Scripture. Classroom displays, where key questions are highlighted, allow children to reflect on their learning.
- Standards in RE are good. Pupils are very passionate about their learning.
- RE is central to the life of the school. The subject leaders display excellent knowledge and skill in supporting staff, developing their expertise and inspiring them to teach with confidence. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation ensure that the existing good standards in teaching and learning are being maintained and will improve further.
- Spiritual and moral development are outstanding.
- The children in the school exhibit exemplary behaviour and Christian attitudes. Their strong sense of living as members of a family of faith is witnessed throughout the school.
- The range and quality of worship in the school are of an extremely high standard. This is acknowledged by clergy, parents and children. Prayer is a natural part of the daily rhythm of the school day. The school's Catholic ethos is enhanced by the high quality of the physical environment and the many displays celebrating its Catholic and cultural identity.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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

- Ensure that there is consistency across all year groups with regard to the provision of a range of appropriate differentiated activities, linked to the levels of attainment, which allows all children to confidently demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key focus of each topic.
- Embed the assessment process.

Full Report

The school as a Catholic community

The school community:	Outstanding
The wider community:	Outstanding

- St John's is a school that knows its community and successfully nurtures and supports its members; there is a strong sense of welcome from the moment you step over the threshold.
- The school has firmly embraced the spirit of discipleship and the principles of stewardship. The positive outcomes resulting from this Christian witness can be seen in the generosity with which all in the school share their gifts and talents for the good of others.
- Throughout the school there is firm evidence that you are within a community of faith. Particularly strong examples include:
 - The centrality and living out of the children's mission statement, 'Love to learn and learn to love'.
 - The determination of all in the school to continually strive for improvement and to enrich the lives of the pupils in their care.
 - The attractiveness of the school environment, which is enhanced by the many displays and artefacts celebrating its Catholic nature.
- There are very good systems of communication, ensuring all are very well-informed and regularly updated.
- The links with the Cathedral are outstanding, ensuring that there is a joint approach to each liturgical season and enabling families to connect with the life of the parish.
- St John's is very much a diocesan school. The executive headteacher plays a key role in the development and support of Catholic education in the diocese. Links with local Catholic schools are strong and mutually supportive.
- The school has recently twinned with a school in Bamenda and a good start has been made with establishing links. The children expressed great excitement about this project. This initiative will be even stronger once it has been embedded.
- The school benefits from a very rich cultural mix. As yet, the school has not fully explored how this can be celebrated and incorporated into the life of the school.

Curriculum religious education

Attainment and progress:	Good
Quality of teaching:	Good
Leadership and management of RE:	Good

- The leadership of the director for teaching and learning in promoting and developing RE is outstanding.
- The director of teaching and learning and school leader provide excellent support for all staff, in particular the seven teachers who are new to the school since September, enabling them to deliver RE lessons with confidence and enthusiasm.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about RE lessons and make good progress.
- Detailed planning, that includes key questions and links to levels of attainment, ensures that pupils are supported and challenged in their learning.
- A distinct 'other faiths unit' has been produced by the director of teaching and learning, using the language of the level descriptors, ensuring that this area of work is covered to a very high standard. The use of a persona doll captures pupils' interest.

- Teaching is judged to be good by the school. Teaching observed on the day and evidence in the pupils' books validate this judgement.
- Key questions and vocabulary displayed in classrooms support pupils in their learning.
- The passion and knowledge of the executive headteacher and the director of teaching and learning ensure a continuous drive to enhance existing good practice.
- The monitoring and assessment of RE lead to the very effective addressing of any issues.
- More careful consideration needs to be given to the link between learning objectives and the activities planned, to deliver the key religious messages.
- Formative marking is being increasingly used to inform future learning.

Spiritual and moral development

Spiritual development:	Outstanding
Moral development:	Outstanding

- Worship in the school is richly varied and of a high quality. The sense of reverence, stillness and thoughtfulness is consistently high, from individual pupils taking the opportunity for quiet reflection in the school's central prayer area to whole school celebrations. Great value is placed on worship and the importance of prayer by pupils, staff, parents and governors.
- The parish clergy work closely with the school to provide liturgical celebrations that provide opportunities for the spiritual development of the whole community.
- The school environment fully supports the worship in the school, providing opportunities for children to experience the awe and wonder of God's creation and joy of living. The recent addition of an outside prayer area, once fully developed, will be a real asset to the spiritual life of the whole community.
- The children in the school demonstrate outstanding behaviour and Christian attitudes in their relationships. Key factors promoting this include:
 - The very good role models provided by the staff and older children in the school.
 - The consistent reinforcement of Gospel values.
 - The high expectations of pupils.
 - The Good Samaritan and Stewardship awards.
- Pupils in the school are justly proud of their school; they describe the school as 'like a big family, who work together to figure things out.'

Leadership and management: Outstanding

- The personal witness to the faith provided by the executive headteacher, school leader and the director of teaching and learning at St John's provides a strong vision and direction for the work of the school.
- The rigorous and effective approach to the monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the life of the school enables the school to constantly challenge itself. There is a constant drive for improvement and an insistence on high standards in all aspects.
- All those in positions of leadership are committed to developing and living the Christian ethos of the school.
- The governing body are strong supporters of the school and also act as a critical friend. They recognise their need for further training and to become a more visible presence in the school.
- Good progress has been made on the issues identified for improvement in the last validation, particularly in developing the involvement of pupils in the planning and delivery of acts of worship.

School details

Name of school	St John's Cathedral Catholic Primary School
URN:	116385
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll:	249 (including nursery)
Chair of Governors:	Sharon Furtado
Executive Headteacher:	Catherine Hobbs

St John's Cathedral Catholic School was built in 1980 and is situated near the centre of Portsmouth. It is of average size and the number of boys and girls is approximately the same. The school serves the parish of St John's Cathedral and the vast majority of its pupils are Catholic. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language, or who are from a minority ethnic group, is higher than average, as is the percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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

Robert Dare	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 whole school and class worship.
- Observations of teaching and learning in RE, including a joint observation with the director of teaching and learning.
- Pupil work scrutiny.
- Feedback of key findings to the leadership team and representatives of the governing body.

Conclusion

The validators would like to thank the executive headteacher, school leader, director for teaching and learning, staff, governors, the Cathedral Dean and assistant priest, parents and pupils of St John's Cathedral 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.