



Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

INSPECTION REPORT

St Robert Southwell Catholic Primary School

Lamb's Farm Road, Roffey, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 4LP

Telephone: 01403 252357

e-mail address: office@st-robertsouthwell.w-sussex.sch.uk

DfES Number: 126053

Headteacher: Mrs A Hudspith

Chair of Governors: Mrs V Peppiatt

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 10 June 2010

Date of previous inspection: 16 July 2008

Lead Inspector: Mrs A Ireland

Associate Inspector: Ms T Kenefick

Description of School

The school is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Crawley Deanery of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. It is maintained by West Sussex Local Authority. The principal parish which the school serves is St John the Evangelist, Horsham. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 64%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and 10% in Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 143. The attainment of pupils on entering the school covers a wide range, and is broadly average overall. The proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals is below average. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, however, the number of pupils entering school who are at an early stage of learning English is above average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

The mission statement states that 'in partnership with staff, governors, parents and the parish community our aim is to create a welcoming, happy school environment which embodies a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation' and this is indeed what is lived out in the everyday life of St Robert Southwell Catholic school. It is an inclusive and affirming community which seeks to enable pupils to develop academically, socially, spiritually and emotionally to the best of their abilities. It encourages respect, independence and a desire to do the very best from both staff and pupils. Under the guidance of the inspirational headteacher and with excellent leadership at all levels, the school displays high standards and a commitment to excellence. It is outstanding in all aspects of school life especially in terms of its spiritual life and care for pupils. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Attainment in religious education is high. It is an outstanding example of a vibrant Catholic school community.

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has continued to build on the considerable strengths identified in the last inspection. Areas for development suggested in the previous report have been rigorously addressed. Ownership of the mission statement now extends to the whole school community, including pupils. The school council now plays a significant role in the life of the school. Communication with parents has been further strengthened through the development of an informative and comprehensive school website. Pupils are now more active in planning and leading liturgies, older ones often helping younger pupils. Staff have worked hard to ensure that activities they plan are challenging for all pupils including the most able.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school has an excellent capacity to improve. Never complacent, it continues to develop and thrive. In order for the school to become even better, the headteacher, together with a committed and dedicated staff and a governing body who are knowledgeable and challenging, ensures that all aspects of school life and learning are regularly monitored and evaluated. Areas for development are then quickly identified and acted upon. Excellent relationships, high expectations and a strong sense of teamwork create a positive atmosphere where pupils flourish and want to succeed. Excellent systems of evaluation are well embedded and are clearly focussed on raising standards. These are set in the context of a caring, reconciling Catholic community, which seeks to enable all to reach their full potential. In addition, there is a culture of innovation and measured risk-taking, which impacts very positively on the school's capacity for improvement.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- In line with the school's vision, continue to involve parents in the prayer life of the school and seek ways to assist them to support their children's spiritual and moral development.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

A key ingredient of the school's success is the outstanding leadership and management of its Catholic life. Governors, headteacher, assistant head and the RE co-ordinator have worked tirelessly to promote high standards and the fullest possible personal development of all within the school. As a consequence, morale is very high. Excellent relationships at all levels result in a culture of teamwork and support. The headteacher is an inspirational and innovative leader, whose vision of Catholic education is clearly articulated and supported by staff and governors. From the moment one enters the school, its Catholic identity is proclaimed through the many beautiful displays, such as the display on Cardinal Newman, and the stunning focal area in the hall. The prominently displayed mission statement is lived out in the daily life of the school. It is regularly reviewed to ensure that its importance and significance is clearly understood by all members of the school community. The provision for pastoral care is outstanding. Pupils with special educational needs or those who have English as a second language are particularly well supported. Pupils respond very well to the care, guidance, support, trust and respect given to them and, as a consequence, their behaviour is outstanding. Governors have a very positive impact on the school's Catholic identity and performance. They know their school very well and are happy to share their skills to support it. They are fully involved in school evaluation of its Catholic life and standards. Through meetings, visits and committees, such as the Spiritual Life and Curriculum committee, they offer support and challenge in order to move the school on. The partnership with parents is outstanding. Parents have overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards the school. These were summed up by one parent who wrote, 'this is an amazing school. Its holistic approach is refreshing in this increasingly secular society'. Parents are very supportive and active in the life of the school, as evidenced by the work undertaken in the school grounds by parents and their involvement in running the 'Footsteps' programme.

They are kept well informed about their children's work and the life of the school through newsletters and the school website. Of particular note is the way parents are encouraged to support their children's spiritual and learning journey. Links with the parish are excellent. Both the parish priest and deacon are regular visitors and are actively involved in the life of the school. They are regarded as important members of the school family, regularly taking part the life and worship of the school community. The school makes a regular contribution to the parish magazine and parishioners are invited to school events, including the senior citizens tea party. The home, school and parish partnership is further strengthened by the parish 'Buddies' who come in to school to support pupils, especially those who are vulnerable or who have language needs. In addition, a Polish parishioner runs a weekly discussion group with Polish pupils and liaises with their parents. The support given to the parish programme for reception of the sacraments is excellent. There is a very good relationship with the other parish primary school. For example parallel classes from both schools will be attending three days of parish activities. This will enable both schools to work more closely together and to share their gifts and talents. The school has excellent relationships with other Catholic schools in the deanery and the Catholic secondary school.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

The prayer life of the school is outstanding. It is achieved through a commitment by staff and clergy to provide a varied programme of Masses, liturgies such as services of Reconciliation, key stage and whole school assemblies and class worship. These are very well planned, monitored and effectively evaluated so that ways are sought to continually develop and enhance provision. Pupils are encouraged to support the prayer and Eucharistic life of the parish by serving, reading and singing in the choir. Pupils, therefore, are given excellent opportunities to participate in acts of worship and to develop ritual competency. They are encouraged to plan their own liturgies. During a Key Stage 2 assembly on the theme of Change, pupils interacted thoughtfully with the headteacher, who was leading the assembly. Pupils engaged in role play and reading and did so with great confidence. Pupils were attentive throughout, eager to offer suggestions and to engage in a simple examination of conscience with reverence and reflection. They joined in the prayers and well chosen hymns with joy and enthusiasm. Prayer is central to the life of the school and permeates all aspects of school life. For example, there is a little church area set up in the reception play area for pupils to use. In addition to the traditional prayers of the Church, pupils are introduced to a variety of prayer forms, such a meditation and spontaneous prayer. Every class has a focus for prayer and these are, without exception, outstanding. They are age appropriate, interactive and eye catching. They encourage engagement and prayer and are well used. ICT, music, candlelight and darkness are all used effectively to create a prayerful atmosphere. The beautiful Rosary and Sacramental gardens provide opportunities both for personal prayer and shared liturgies, such as the May procession. Parents are offered the opportunity to come together to pray during Lent and Advent. Older pupils are taken on retreat days and given the opportunity to attend the Life of Christ experience at Wintershall.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school /college promote community cohesion?

The mission of the school is to 'foster self esteem', to enable pupils to 'make their own unique contribution to society' and be able to "recognise the sacredness of the individual'. This is what drives the school to promote excellent community cohesion. The result is a warm, welcoming community where all are valued, feel safe and thrive. From the very beginning of their time in school, pupils are encouraged to show respect and consideration for others.

The curriculum promotes shared values and helps pupils to understand and celebrate diversity. This was demonstrated by a lovely Reception Class display on Hinduism in the hall area. Other faiths and cultures are celebrated through the whole curriculum. Parents and pupils with other faith and cultural backgrounds are actively involved in sharing their faith experiences. The school takes very seriously the command by God for humankind to be stewards of creation. The school is actively involved with Fair Trade status and through initiatives such as Eco-Schools, the Organic Garden, and the 'Footsteps' travel plan, seeks to highlight for pupils the importance of responsibility for all God's creation. As a result of this work pupils received an award from the district council for their presentation on climate change. The care, guidance and support for all pupils is noteworthy. All pupils, including those who are vulnerable or troubled, are very well supported. This enables them to take a full and active role in school life. A Learning Mentor has been appointed to work with groups of pupils and their families and the school offers the 'Rainbows' programme for those pupils experiencing loss and bereavement. Pupils' talents and gifts are encouraged through the rich curriculum and through the provision of a wide range of clubs including art, cricket, and guitar clubs. The exciting outside environment with the stable area, the cave tree and the amphitheatre, where the 'St Robert Southwell's Got Talent' takes place, stimulate both imagination and creativity. Pupils are given excellent opportunities to exercise responsibility in a variety of ways, such as peer mediators and library monitors. The pupil voice is respected and listened to. The lively and enthusiastic school council play an important role in the life of the school. They are the steering group in the bid to achieve Fair Trade status. Pupils are encouraged to think about the needs of others both locally and globally and they engage in a wide range of fundraising activities. Through their contact with an orphanage in Sri Lanka, pupils are developing an appreciation and understanding of the lives of children from a different part of the world. Pupils are actively involved in the local community, visiting the local nursing home and helping to develop safer routes to schools. The school has excellent links with other schools in the area through its work with the Horsham East Learning Partnership, which undertakes joint in-service and training for staff. Very good links exist with Churches Together who have helped the school develop its grounds.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Since the previous inspection, the school has successfully continued to raise standards in religious education across the school. Pupils enter school with broadly average attainment. From the very beginning of their school life pupils make excellent progress, so that by the end of Key Stage 2, many are attaining levels much higher than expected for their age. Attainment is at least in line with literacy and sometimes above. Boys and girls are attaining equally well. Pupils throughout the school have a very good understanding and knowledge of scripture and Church teaching. Excellent oral skills mean that they are well able to express their thoughts and ideas about what they are learning in a lively and interesting way. They are familiar with stories from the Bible and older pupils use Bible references with ease. Pupils have an excellent religious vocabulary, which they use effectively. They are well able to relate what they have been taught to their own lives and choices. This was clearly demonstrated by a pupil in the Year 4/5 class who said 'Religion makes me think about what I do. It is about everything'. All pupils work particularly well with talk partners in order to consolidate learning and deepen thinking. Pupils are able to use skills gained in other curriculum areas in order to make excellent progress. For example, pupils in the Year 1/2 class used role play in order to demonstrate how Zacchaeus' life changed when he met Jesus.

This was then photographed by one of the group for future reference. In the Year 5/6 class a group of pupils were using the internet independently to compile PowerPoint presentations to illustrate the sacrament of reconciliation. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their lessons and speak with great enthusiasm about how teachers explain things to them and give them exciting things to do. In all classes pupils settle quickly and quietly to work and as a consequence very little time is wasted. Their behaviour in class is exemplary. Pupils with special educational needs make excellent progress because they receive very good support and are given appropriate activities. Pupils are able to record work in a variety of interesting ways. For example pupils in the Year R/1 class were producing zig-zag books to illustrate the story of Levi, whilst in the Year 2/3 class pupils were designing posters to illustrate God's love. All Pupils take a real pride in their workbooks, which are well presented.

Grade 1

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Teaching is very good and often outstanding. Outstanding teaching is evident when teachers have high expectations, challenge pupils, especially the most able, to deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding. Such teaching, encourages pupils to think and work independently and provides activities which stretch pupils, thus ensuring outstanding outcomes. All teachers clearly articulate learning outcomes and success criteria to pupils. They employ a range of teaching strategies to engage pupils and stimulate interest. High level questioning is used to expertly move pupils' religious thinking on. All teachers incorporate prayer and reflection into lessons. This helps pupils to relate what they have been learning to their lives and to deepen their relationship with God. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of the Catholic faith and are able to impart this knowledge to pupils. They have excellent classroom control and organisation. Resources are well used and work given to pupils is carefully prepared and designed to produce high quality work. Teaching assistants are well prepared and empowered by very good ongoing professional development. The relationship between teachers and teaching assistants is outstanding, providing an excellent role model for pupils, as well as impacting very positively on pupil response. Assessment is very good. Assessment for Learning is well embedded and there is recognition of prior learning in planning. As a result, pupils know what they are doing and have an accurate view of their abilities. Regular moderation and agreement trialling of pupils' work by staff ensures consistency and helps maintains high standards across the school. Portfolios of annotated pupils' work provide a useful tool for new staff. Marking is interactive and affirming. Time is given to enable pupils to respond to remarks made in books. This is very good practice and helps move pupils' learning on.

Grade1

Quality of the Curriculum

The time allocated to religious education is in line with the Bishops' recommendation and is very well used. Moreover, religious education is central to the life of the school and is at the heart of the curriculum. It promotes opportunities for spiritual and moral development and challenges pupils to ask deeper questions about faith and life. Planning is excellent. Teachers plan a range of exciting activities which are mostly differentiated to cater for the varying abilities of pupils, including the most able. They are designed to encourage independent work and develop research skills. Very clear and comprehensive policies for religious education and collective worship support the curriculum. The head teacher, who is the co-ordinator for education for personal relationships (EPR) works closely with the RE co-ordinator to ensure that EPR is closely linked to, and complements, the religious education curriculum. Sex education is taught within the context of the Catholic faith. The teaching of other faiths is well done across the school. Very good resources, including a CD of photographs from one of the pupils showing aspects of his faith, support the teaching of other faiths.

Visits, such as the one planned to the new Hindu Temple in Crawley, enhance the quality of teaching and learning. General resources to support religious education are extensive, of very good quality and are easily accessible. Parents are kept well informed about the curriculum and home work is regularly given. This gives parents the opportunity to share in the work done in school. The school is also currently trialling Moodle (a virtual learning environment) in order to support religious education at home and at school.

Grade 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education

Leadership and management of religious education are outstanding. The co-ordinator works closely with the headteacher and ensures that religious education has a very high profile across the school. The co-ordinator has been inspirational in developing exciting and innovative curriculum development. This has significantly improved staff knowledge, confidence and expertise and has had a positive effect on pupil enjoyment and attainment. The co-ordinator has an extensive monitoring role, actively assessing teaching and learning in religious education. During regular teaching and learning meetings with the head teacher any issues arising from these monitoring activities are quickly identified and acted upon. All targets for religious education outlined in the school development plan are being addressed. All staff, especially those who unfamiliar with the Catholic faith, are exceptionally well supported by the co-ordinator, both informally and through regular in-service training from her, the headteacher and the parish priest. In addition, leaders model exemplary practice. The school makes good use of diocesan support and both the headteacher and co-coordinator make a positive contribution to the Diocese, willingly sharing their expertise. The link governor liaises regularly with the co-ordinator. She makes regular formal and informal visits to the school and provides an effective link to the governing body on religious education and worship. The school is very well resourced with books, posters and artefacts. The budget allocated is in line with the core subjects and well spent. Every effort is made by the school to create a stimulating and exciting environment, which significantly enhances the spiritual life of the school. Parents and staff have made enormous contributions, of time, skill and money in order to develop the grounds and the Sacramental and Rosary gardens, creating havens of peace and prayer.

Grade 1