

# DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH VALIDATION REPORT



## St. Paul's Catholic Primary School

City Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 4SZ

URN: 110006  
 Date of previous validation: 4 July 2013  
**Date of this validation: 27 March 2018**

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous validation:	Good
	<b>This validation:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>

<b>The school community:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Attainment and progress in RE:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>The wider community:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Quality of teaching in RE:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Spiritual development:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Leadership and management of RE:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Moral development:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Leadership and management:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>

### This is an outstanding school

- The school's mission to be '*United through Jesus in faith, love and learning*' permeates the life of the school, with all members of the community taking an active part in living it out.
- The headteacher's outstanding leadership impacts positively on all aspects of the life of this highly successful school and outstanding faith community.
- Pupils are outstanding ambassadors for the school and speak about their school with pride. Their outstanding behaviour and attitudes are underpinned by their knowledge and living out of the school's mission statement.
- Religious education (RE) is central to the life of the school. The very good support of the RE leader helps ensure teachers deliver high quality lessons in this core subject. As a result pupils make outstanding progress and achieve highly.
- Pupils demonstrated a very positive attitude to learning in the lessons observed. A pupil survey show they have a high regard for their school. The children spoken with on the day commented on how the Gospels and their learning in RE helps them to live their lives.
- The parish priest offers excellent support to staff and pupils. The links between school and parish are exemplary.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. A very large majority was positive about all aspects of school life, particularly the status of RE within the school and the strong relationships based on Gospel values.
- Spiritual and moral development are outstanding. Pupils are provided with a wide range of spiritual opportunities and provide a Christian witness within the local community. The children in the school demonstrate outstanding behaviour and Christian attitudes, giving of their time and talents to support those in need.
- Leaders provide a very strong and highly effective model of Christian leadership, where all are valued. They inspire the community to share in a strong sense of vision and mission, resulting in a highly collaborative and successful school with a positive ethos.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

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

- Formulate a more refined model of assessment that is more effectively focussed on moving children's learning on in RE.
- Ensure the monitoring carried out in RE is analysed in more detail, used to focus support for improving standards further, and shared more widely with the governing body in order to enable them to better fulfil their role in holding the school to account in relation to RE and its Catholic life.

## Full Report

### The school as a Catholic community

The school community:	Outstanding
The wider community:	Outstanding

- The moment you enter St Paul's you are aware that you are joining a strong Christian community where it's mission to be '*united through Jesus in faith, love and learning*' is lived out on a daily basis. The strength of the welcome is symbolised by the statue of Christ with open arms welcoming everyone, friends and visitors alike, into the school.
- The mission statement is revisited in all classes each September and refreshed by incorporating its key message in a new design each year, created by one of the children. Pupils spoken to talked confidently and gave examples of how they do their best to put the words into action.
- Throughout the school there is clear evidence of its Catholic nature. Particularly strong examples are the use of the phrase *Ad Deum (unto God)* at the start of each piece of work, how the children talk knowledgeably about their class saint, and the staff prayer board.
- The school community, particularly the children are very much at the heart of the school, this is symbolised by the placing of a named pebble by all in the community in the *Oratory* which is at the centre of the school. These remain in place even when they leave, '*Once a St Paul's, always a St Paul's*'. Many do return, a high number of staff and parents are ex-pupils.
- The vast majority of parents hold the school in high regard and would recommend the school to another family.
- There are very good systems of communication, ensuring all stakeholders are well-informed and regularly updated. The school's weekly newsletter and website reflect the importance placed on the Catholic life of the school.
- A very strong partnership exists between the school and local parish. The parish priest is a fervent supporter of the school and is a regular and welcomed visitor. He sees the school as pivotal to the life of the parish. A key feature is the weekly attendance at a weekday mass by a class from the school. This is greatly valued by parishioners and the school community. Staff from the school support and frequently lead parish sacramental programmes.
- St Paul's is very much a diocesan school. The headteacher successfully undertakes a number of roles on behalf of the diocese and the school is always represented at diocesan wide events. Links with local Catholic schools are strong and mutually supportive.
- The school recently undertook a project linked to Catholic Social Teaching and has achieved the first level of the *Romero Award*. Pupils in the school, particularly the *Mini-Vinnies*, recognise the importance of reaching out to those in need. The promotion of Catholic Social Teaching is in its early stages and the school has plans to take this further.

### Curriculum religious education

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

- The evidence in pupils' books, class books, the consistently good or better quality of teaching, the high levels of achievement and discussions with pupils all combine to show that attainment and progress in RE are outstanding.
- Pupils are able to work collaboratively to reflect on issues raised in RE. The level of children's scriptural knowledge is impressive, they would benefit from more planned opportunities within lessons to apply this to their own lives and justify their response.
- Planning is comprehensive and has a clear RE focus. Marking is always supportive and is frequently used to further challenge the children's thinking.
- Teaching assistants play a key role in helping all pupils access the curriculum.

- Pupils are taught respectfully about the key features of other faiths, particularly their similarities with Christianity. Members of the community from other faiths are invited to share their experiences and practice with the children.
- The RE subject leader and headteacher rigorously monitor RE, through observations of teaching, pupil conferencing and work sampling. Outcomes of this monitoring would benefit from a more robust analysis in order to identify where support would provide the most impact.
- The RE leader's passion and drive underpin her very good support for all staff, enabling them to deliver RE lessons with confidence and enthusiasm and helping to ensure that standards in religious education are high.
- The RE governor provides good support in overseeing developments in the subject.

### Spiritual and moral development

Spiritual development:

Outstanding

Moral development:

Outstanding

- The school provides a wide range of high 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 school embraces every opportunity to nurture spirituality and give Christian witness; these include:
  - The range of celebrations linked to the liturgical year, for example, Advent Carol Service, Marian liturgies, Lenten reflection and Passion Plays.
  - The provision of the *Serenity Room* and outside Prayer Garden to support worship.
  - The use of Prayer Pouches and the Prayer Tree to link home and school worship.
- In all classes children take on various roles within class worship, which is to be commended.
- The children in the school demonstrate outstanding behaviour and Christian attitudes in their relationships, with a clear sense of right and wrong. Key factors promoting this include:
  - The outstanding role models provided by the staff and older children in the school.
  - The high expectations of pupils.
  - The consistent reinforcement of Gospel values and their application in helping children make the right choice. This is reflected with the awarding of stickers to *St Paul's People* as part of the weekly Laudate assembly.
- The children take on a variety of leadership roles, for example, school councillors, house captains, *Mini-Vinnies*, and mentors to younger children, and through these provide very good role models to the other pupils in the school.
- Pupils are justifiably proud of their school, commenting, '*St Paul's is a caring community where everyone is welcomed and fits in straight away.*'

### Leadership and management:

Outstanding

- The headteacher's outstanding leadership impacts positively on all aspects of the life of this highly successful school and outstanding faith community.
- Within the school, and across all levels of leadership, including governance, there is a constant drive for improvement and insistence on high standards in all areas.
- Although the school complies with the requirements of the diocesan self-review process, the quality and detail of the reporting needs improving; this will enable governors to better fulfil their role in holding the school to account in relation to RE and the Catholic life of the school.
- The governors interviewed were enthusiastic supporters of the school and are knowledgeable about its strengths. Although there is some evidence that issues relating to RE and the Catholic life of the school are discussed at board level this is not always minuted in sufficient detail to reflect its core status.
- Good progress has been made on the issues identified for improvement in the last validation, particularly in providing training and support for staff in the teaching and assessment of RE.

## School details

<b>Name of school:</b>	St Paul's Catholic Primary School
<b>Age range of pupils:</b>	4 - 11
<b>Gender of pupils:</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on roll:</b>	324
<b>Chair of Governors:</b>	Pat Prime
<b>Headteacher:</b>	Nuala Oster

St Paul's Catholic Primary School is situated in the Parish of St Joseph, Tilehurst. It also serves the Parishes of English Martyrs, Reading and St Bernadette's, Pangbourne. This is a larger than average sized primary school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Other pupils are from an increasing range of ethnic backgrounds including Indian, Eastern European and African. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs support is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or in the care of the local authority, for whom the school receives additional funding (the pupil premium), is well below the national average. A very high percentage of pupils in the school are Catholic, with only a small percentage of pupils coming from other faiths or no faith backgrounds.

## 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 directors/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

Lead Validator: Robert Dare  
Assistant Validator: Brenda Schouller

### 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, parish priest, parents and pupils of St Paul'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.