



Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

INSPECTION REPORT

St Richard's Catholic Primary School

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D/ES Number: 938/3330

Headteacher: **Mrs Catherine Hunn**

Chair of Governors: **Mr Jon Harman**

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: November 20th 2013
Date of previous inspection: November 2007

Lead Inspector: Mrs Theresa Kenefick
Associate Inspector: Mr Richard McKenzie

Description of School

St. Richard's Catholic Primary School, situated in the Cathedral Deanery of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, is maintained by West Sussex Local Authority. As the only Catholic school in the Chichester area, it serves a wide community of several parishes but mainly St. Richard's. The school takes pupils from the age of four to eleven and the number on roll is 228. The school began an expansion programme to one and a half form entry in 2012, which has resulted in an extensive building programme due for completion in February 2014. Currently, 92% of the children are baptised Catholics. About 60% of pupils are of White British heritage but the school has an increasing number of pupils from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, with significant groups being from the Philippines, India, Poland, Portugal and Spain. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high compared with the national average at 33% but in KS1 the percentage is closer to 43%. Pupils eligible for free school meals is below average at about 3% (6). The number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is 0.9%(2), with 16%(36) identified with special educational needs or with disabilities. The proportion of children who are eligible for the pupil premium is well below average, with six children currently receiving free school meals. Currently, there are 7 full time and 8 part time teachers, 61% of whom are Catholic with three holding the Catholic Teachers' Certificate.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St. Richard's Mission Statement says it aims to 'guide our children to a more active and personal faith in Jesus Christ' and they achieve this wholeheartedly. The school is characterised by many key outstanding aspects, notably in the area of Catholic life, community, prayer, worship and leadership.

One parent stated that, "I feel that we are part of something very special here at St Richard's' and the inspection team was able to uphold this description of a highly inclusive community school which has much to celebrate. A vibrant prayer life underpins their daily work, led by a committed head teacher who cares for each and every child, parent and staff member. Her coherent vision for the school makes this a living and worshipping community.

Overall in religious education, pupils make good progress and examples of outstanding teaching were observed on the inspection day. Attainment across the school is typically good but more able children could be attaining more highly at the end of each key stage. The school knows what more needs to be done to stretch the most able children. The curriculum offered is rich and varied and engages children in a good level of thinking about their own faith journeys.

St Richard's is a school which knows its strengths very well and fully recognises areas for development. As such, it is well placed to continue to flourish. One parent said, "They are all very caring, loving and firm when they need to be. Children feel very safe and free to explore and learn. For me, these are the functions of a Catholic life".

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, St Richard's has successfully addressed the identified key issue of increasing opportunities for pupils to play a more active part in planning and presenting liturgies and masses. Of particular note, all children on Tuesdays take turns in their classes to plan their own liturgies. Many Year 6 children are trained altar servers and choose to spend lunchtimes serving at the parish mass, which was deliberately moved to lunchtime to allow children to join in. House captains lead their houses in house assemblies and they spoke with enthusiasm about what they had done and planned to do for theirs, including Powerpoints. In the children's books, there is evidence of their planning for liturgies and a Year 6 child said that he was very much looking forward to when it was his turn.

Since the last inspection, the school has begun an expansion programme, currently underway, in response to the growing demand for Catholic education in the area.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

The school has the capacity to build on current strengths and to refine practice in the following areas:

- Provide challenge for the most able children in religious education so that at the end of key stage 2, their attainment at level 5 at least matches that of writing and the national expectations for children of this age. This will be achieved by:
 - Teachers using assessment criteria accurately to drive planning
 - Children understanding their next steps in learning through child-friendly level descriptors
 - Effective differentiation well matched to individual needs.
 - Disseminate the above best practice across the school for all more able children;
 - Outstanding teachers to model excellent teaching and learning for others to observe.
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The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

Dedicated passion, energetic drive and clear direction epitomise the head teacher of St. Richard's, who is guided by the school Mission Statement, 'to know, to love and to serve'. Supported by a strong team, she has demonstrated consistent Catholic leadership during the challenge of ongoing building works and as such shows a great capacity to respond to new challenges. Parents reported that the head teacher is exceptionally approachable and provides 'fantastic' support; they highly value this; 'the barrier of an office door is removed' because she is on the playground daily, 'nipping things in the bud' and 'knowing the children inside out'.

School leaders evaluate their school well and are readily able to identify where improvement is necessary as exemplified by the need to raise attainment of the most able children in religious education.

Governors, led by a supportive Chair who visits several times a week, are well placed to know and celebrate the school and its many strengths and identify areas for development. They enjoy an open invitation to join in lessons and talk to children; they join the staff for an annual in-service day focussed on developing the Catholic life of the school; they attend liturgies and masses. In response to oversubscription at St Richard's, school leaders and governors have successfully embraced expansion, thereby ensuring the best quality of provision for Catholic children in the surrounding parishes.

St Richard's very effectively promotes very good relationships between home, school and parish. It listens to its key stakeholders and responds to their opinions and concerns, an example being the introduction of the Wednesday Word, following a parent forum discussion. A very good number of parents provided evidence for the inspection and all comments were praiseworthy of the school. One parent said that 'it is like a family here', a statement echoed by the head teacher who described the school as a 'family- just one which is bigger than normal'. Parents are very complimentary about the school and value the significant contribution St Richard's makes to the spiritual, moral and social development of the children in its care.

The school works closely with the wider Cathedral deanery network and the Diocese, with staff liaising regularly and effectively. There is a regular meeting of Chair of Governors, parish priest and head teachers. Communication and liaison with the parish is excellent, supported by a very involved chaplain and parish priest. Initiatives such as the parent discussion groups and the prayer sponsors for Holy Communion candidates underline the success of liaison across the Catholic community. Parents recorded that they appreciated the value of this involvement.

As a result of the high quality Catholic leadership of St Richard's, the children flourish in a community which loves and cares for them.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

The Mission Statement says that they 'take Christ at the Centre of all we do, to know, to love, to serve', and this is evident in the many ways in which the school supports children on their spiritual journeys. The school designs worship experiences which it intends will 'inspire children to answer the challenge of living the faith' and from the evidence seen, this judgement is readily upheld.

In the assembly observed, children were challenged to ask themselves what they could do to serve each other and the head teacher asked them to tell her about people who had done something special today to serve them. This creative liturgy was enhanced by the involvement of many children who took part in a joint reading of the gospel, two played a piano beautifully and the school enthusiastically sang and signed the hymn with year 2 children leading. There was a tangible sense of a prayerful, worshipping community.

There is an impressive range of opportunities provided for children and the wider community to experience high quality liturgy, the Eucharist and other acts of collective worship. As one parent noted, "The joint schools Advent Service in Arundel Cathedral is a truly moving start to the Christmas season". Of note, each Key Stage 2 class plans its own mass with the parish priest; staff and governors pray together on a weekly basis, as do the children who pray the Rosary on a voluntary basis. Children speak proudly of their Jubilee prayer garden and know that they can go in at any time when they want to have quiet time; they value this opportunity afforded to them to pray privately. Parents spoke of how the community pulls together during times of need, one parent recalling how the whole community prayed for her when she was ill.

There is much evidence in the books of children writing their own prayers and many demonstrate a good sense of self-reflection, for example one child wrote, "When I don't know what You want me to be, help me to remember the words of St Paul".

Children were observed engaged in a variety of prayer forms and prayerful moments as was exemplified at the end of the Year 6 lesson. Prayer included spontaneous prayer in Year 5, where children passed around an Advent candle and took turns to offer a thought. In Year 2, children took part in a litany and in Reception/Year 1, children responded with "Lord I am waiting" as they put their work into a special gold box. In classrooms, evidence of prayer cards, 'holding' crosses and prayer boxes indicate that there is a deep commitment to prayer at St Richards.

Despite much disruption caused by the building work, the school environment remains rich in evidence that this is a Catholic school, enhanced in every classroom with a reverent prayer focus and high quality, colourful displays of RE work which celebrate the children's efforts in previous topics. Children aspire to have their work displayed on the central "Celebration of Best Work" display.

The prayer life of the school is rich, packed with variety and opportunity for all members of the community and as such continues to be outstanding. As one parent said, "My child is given a voice and her confidence has really grown in the years she has been at the school". From the age of six this child has set up her own prayer table at home.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school /college promote community cohesion?

St Richard's is a very inclusive and community focused school and, in so many ways is committed to the children's social, moral and cultural development. An example of this, reflecting the significant group of families from the Philippines, was their recent appeal to raise funds for the victims' of Typhoon Haiyan and in feedback Filipino parents were appreciative. The commitment of the school to the Church's principle of The Common Good is clearly in evidence. In children's books there is evidence of praying for the Philippines and for Syria as Pope Francis called us to do.

By virtue of its rich cultural mix St Richard's provides an excellent environment in which to prepare pupils to live in a diverse society. The school's commitment to the Comenius project, with its links to six partner countries provides good opportunity for children to collaborate further with people from different cultures. Visits from the Comenius school staff in September 2013 have added real opportunities for mutual sharing of cultures. Children interviewed about the experience said spoke enthusiastically about the project.

St Richard's award of Fairtrade status underlines its great commitment to promoting with the children an understanding of what it is to support 'the lost, the last, the least, the little' in the global context. Year 6 children run a Fair-trade tuck shop each week and the children are proud that the money goes to CAFOD. School newsletters and their website illustrate the great wealth of work the school does for the less fortunate and needy in our society. Appeals supported include the Chestnut Tree House, Cabrini, and Stone Pillow, a homeless charity. Recently, a cake sale raised money for Macmillan nurses and Barnados. Children confirm that they are actively involved in choosing charities to support.

Children are encouraged and enjoy taking on increased roles of responsibility for their school community, with active school council, eco warriors, altar servers, peer mediators etc. The school aims that every child will have held a role of responsibility before they leave the school and they seem well on the way to achieving this. One child said that it was important to hold a role because 'it improves people skills, leadership and confidence'. Children spoke of peer mediators playing an important role on the playground, 'backing up the teachers' in maintaining a calm environment. Children from St Richard's meet and share experiences in the wider community, namely through deanery activities and school council days.

The parents are very active in school life, playing their part in providing the very best education for the children of St Richard's; their current fundraising aim is to the replace the adventure playground.

Grade 1

Quality of the Curriculum

The religious education curriculum based on the 'Come and See' programme, fulfils the requirements of the Diocese and the Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools. The school meets the required 10% curriculum time for religious education in all key stages, with an interesting arrangement for Years 5 and 6 where all RE is delivered in one morning. Staff report that this is a highly effective way of giving children a good length of time to express their learning in a wide range of creative ways.

Outcomes in the children's books indicate that religious education is central to learning in the school and that they are given opportunity to think ethically and theologically and develop spirituality. Opportunities were observed which provided children with occasion to enhance their literacy skills in religious education, through reading, writing and speaking and listening.

Parents are very supportive of the religious education curriculum. In feedback, they said that the teaching of RE was excellent and that teachers do it in such way that the children are naturally inquisitive about their faith.

One child said that religious education lessons are like a prayer while another said that 'they are very calm and relaxing; you can take your time; sometimes music playing makes it very special'. Children enjoy cross curricular learning and spoke of how much they enjoy art, music and drama in their lessons. Some good use of ICT by both staff and children was observed, as exemplified in year six where a more able group were using the internet for research and in year five where a PowerPoint called children to think reflectively.

Children had recently studied Judaism across the school and there was much evidence of good quality related work. They will go on later in the year to study Islam. Policies and programmes of study for Sex Education and Education in Personal Relationship ensure that the children receive very good development of their social and moral understanding.

Grade 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education

An effective working relationship exists on the leadership team for religious education, with the deputy head working closely with a part time teacher to provide a clear direction for their subject. They demonstrated capacity to work collaboratively to bring about improvement. Their example is valued by the staff, who readily seek their advice; they provide excellent moral support and their impact is clear. There is evidence of where their support has raised the quality of teaching through focused monitoring and collaborative planning. Both members of the team evaluate their subject very well and this sets them in a good position to raise standards of teaching and learning even further.

The subject leaders model outstanding teaching, typified by the creation of a reverent atmosphere during lessons, when children were taken on a spiritual journey of learning and made excellent progress; they are well equipped to share this with colleagues across the school.

Evidence indicated that monitoring systems are well embedded, exemplified by a regular cycle of classroom and liturgy observations, pupil conferencing and work scrutiny. Continual professional development is embedded, with feedback records utilised and dissemination at staff meeting a common feature. Evidence of moderated and standardized work was seen and the leaders are actively engaged with the staff in leveling work for the new Come and See programme.

In summary, religious education is very well led. It is due to this confident leadership supported by the strong head teacher that standards will be driven up and the school will flourish.

Grade 1