

REVIEW REPORT FOR  
ST SWITHUN'S CATHOLIC  
PRIMARY SCHOOL

|                                |                                      |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Name of School:</b>         | St Swithun's Catholic Primary School |
| <b>Head teacher/Principal:</b> | Andrew Olive                         |
| <b>Hub:</b>                    | Portsmouth Hub                       |
| <b>School type:</b>            | Voluntary aided                      |
| <b>MAT (if applicable):</b>    | N/A                                  |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Estimate at this QA Review:</b>      | Good       |
| <b>Date of this Review:</b>             | 29/01/2018 |
| <b>Estimate at last QA Review</b>       | N/A        |
| <b>Date of last QA Review</b>           | N/A        |
| <b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b> | Good       |
| <b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>  | 03/02/2016 |

**Quality Assurance Review**

The review team, comprising of host school leaders and visiting reviewers agree that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

|  |      |
|--|------|
| <b>School Improvement Strategies</b>                   | Good |
| <b>Outcomes for Pupils</b>                             | Good |
| <b>Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment</b>    | Good |
| <b>Area of Excellence</b>                              | N/A  |
| <b>Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence</b> | N/A  |
| <b>Overall Estimate</b>                                | Good |

*Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.*

## **1. Information about the school**

- St Swithun's is an average-sized primary school. It is typically over-subscribed. The school is in an urban area, with pupils attending from nearby and further afield.
- There are two classes in Reception, and three mixed aged classes; Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6.
- An above average proportion of pupils have English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also broadly average.
- Between 2010 and 2015, there were four headteachers and a large turnover of staff. Since the appointment of the current headteacher, staffing is now more stable.

### **2.1 School Improvement Strategies - Follow up from previous review**

- This is the school's first Challenge Partners review.

### **2.2 School Improvement Strategies - What went well**

- The inspirational headteacher has established a positive learning culture where pupils are at the heart of the school's work and all pupils and staff are enabled to succeed. A relentless focus on school improvement, led by the acting deputy headteacher, is having a positive impact.
- As a result of effective leadership, the school has a strongly nurturing ethos, an atmosphere of enjoyment, growth and aspiration, which is shared by staff and pupils. There is a strong capacity for further improvement.
- Despite having high expectations, leaders are mindful of the work-life balance and well-being of staff, and ensure they are well supported in their professional development.
- Although fairly new to their roles, middle leaders demonstrate enthusiasm and drive for their subjects. They have actively implemented targeted action plans, led staff training and reported to colleagues and governors on the impact of their initiatives. Coaching and mentoring by senior leaders has contributed much to their development.

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- Leaders are ambitious for the whole school community. They share a determination to make the school the best it can be. Leadership at all levels is focussed on improving pupils' outcomes, but not at the expense of pupils' all-round development. Leaders promote a strong spiritual ethos that permeates the school. This is reflected in the outstanding relationships between all adults and pupils. Pupils are able to reflect on their behaviour, hopes and aspirations. Leaders ensure the curriculum is not solely focused on core subjects; for example, pupils' learning is punctuated by creative enrichment through music and French.
- Leaders routinely monitor the quality of teaching and learning and track pupils' progress. These strategies provide an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for further development. The school improvement plan sets out the school's main priorities, includes quantifiable targets, clear actions, milestones and responsibilities. Responsibilities are distributed across leaders at all levels.
- The achievement of pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is closely monitored. Leaders keep an eye on how well pupils from different backgrounds and those who have English as an additional language are doing. Careful tracking has a positive impact on pupils' progress, as any anomalies are quickly spotted and addressed.

**2.3 School Improvement Strategies - Even better if...**

...leaders were to continue to foster a greater consistency in internal assessment procedures.

...leaders were to devise a succinct overview of pupil outcomes to provide the big picture for leaders, governors and wider stakeholders.

...the achievement of the most able pupils was tracked as closely as other groups.

### **3.1 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Follow up from previous review**

- This is the school's first Challenge Partners review.

### **3.2 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - What went well**

- Across the school, pupils are enthusiastic learners. From the early years onwards, they are attentive and keen to do well. Teachers successfully encourage pupils to develop very secure learning skills. They become increasingly adept at reflecting on their own learning and challenging themselves. Such learning behaviours are becoming more widespread as a result of a whole-school 'growth mindset' approach.
- Children bounce into the early years classes, ready and eager to learn. Adults develop warm relationships with them and pitch activities closely to children's individual needs. The highly organised and sharply focussed approach to teaching phonics bears fruit, not least because of the strong partnership with parents.
- Teaching in the early years strikes an excellent balance between the pursuit of high standards and promoting creativity. Learning themes, chosen by the children, engage, motivate and inspire them. This is reflected in the efforts they make and in the high-quality work they produce. Pupils take great pride in their learning and persevere.
- Teachers support learning effectively through their imaginative interpretation of the curriculum, skilful questioning and precise feedback during lessons. Among pupils' many positive comments were, 'I love phonics and learning new sounds', and 'teachers have taken me from my comfort zone, but they support me'.
- Teachers create stimulating learning environments. Prompts for learning typically include, 'learning walls' with work in progress, vocabulary lists, and celebratory examples of good work. Diagrams such as 'story mountains' provide pupils with useful reminders about how to structure their narrative writing.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They are flexible and intuitive, often taking the initiative in providing bespoke support for pupils.
- Lesson planning takes account of assessment information and, for the most part, teachers ensure all groups are suitably challenged. The core texts used in English lessons stimulate pupils' interests and provide an effective context for the development of pupils' skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Studying the same text as their classmates contributes much to the self-esteem of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, enabling them to pick up ideas from the more confident pupils.

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- A consistent approach to teaching mathematics is accelerating pupils' progress. Pupils benefit from teachers' sustained emphasis on developing mathematical fluency; they are learning to calculate mentally and are less dependent on pencil and paper methods. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the various techniques they use when solving mathematical problems. Routinely, concepts are introduced through a sequence of concrete, pictorial and abstract activities. This benefits pupils who need a wide range of practical activities to fully understand. At the same time, the more able pupils have ample opportunities to explore ideas and gain deeper insights, often making links to their everyday lives.

**3.3 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Even better if...**

- ...there was more consistency in challenging the more able pupils so that they gain a greater depth of knowledge and understanding.
- ...the highly effective practice in the best lessons was shared across the school to achieve more consistency in the quality of teaching.
- ...leaders were to clarify the school's approach to marking, to ensure consistency and help pupils gain the maximum benefit from teachers' feedback.

**4. Outcomes for Pupils**

- Pupils make good progress through the school and typically reach above average standards.
- Children in the early years make rapid and sustained progress. They achieve well across all areas of learning. The proportion reaching a good level of development is usually well above average. Children's communication skills develop quickly; they speak confidently and listen with understanding. Their very secure phonics skills underpin the outstanding progress they make in reading and writing.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are building well on their starting points. Attainment at Key Stage 1 is on track to exceed that in recent years. There is an upward trend in the Year 1 phonics check outcomes. Last year, they were above the national average.
- Girls have typically outperformed boys in Key Stage 1. In 2017, there was a 17% gap in the proportion reaching expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined. This difference is diminishing. Boys and girls in the current Year 1 and 2 classes are progressing at similar rates and reaching comparable standards.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good headway in reading and writing. There is an upward trend in their attainment. Pupils increasingly 'read between the lines', drawing inferences from texts and gaining insights into the characteristics of different genres, such as biography, narrative and historical accounts.
- Pupils increasingly incorporate into their writing ideas they have picked up while

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reading. Some write with considerable flair. For example, one Year 4 pupil wrote:

*'One freezing, icy and cold morning, Dorothy was feeding the chickens because they were starting to peck at the snowy white ground. Delicate crystal icicles were forming on the trees'*

- Although the proportion of pupils reaching expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined was above average last year, in recent years, pupils across the key stage have not achieved as well in mathematics as in English. As a result of the current drive to address this issue, pupils are gaining greater numerical fluency and are better able to tackle mathematical problems.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make rapid progress due to the highly effective provision.
- The achievement of the majority of pupils with English as an additional language is at least in line with that of other pupils, with many attaining above average expectations.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 prevents meaningful comparisons of their progress against other pupils. Weekly monitoring of vulnerable groups across the school, including those who are disadvantaged, indicates that most make good progress. Those who fall behind are quickly identified and supported through well-targeted interventions.

**5. Area of Excellence**

None submitted.

**6. What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?**

School leaders would like opportunities to explore how to ensure the more able pupils reach their potential in achieving a greater depth in their studies.

**This review will support the school's continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities.**