

DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH S48 VALIDATION REPORT



St Swithun's Catholic Primary School, Southsea

Taswell Road, Southsea, Hants PO5 2RG

Date of previous validation 3rd December 2014
Date of this validation **22nd November 2019**

Overall effectiveness	Previous s48 validation:	Requires Improvement
	This s48 validation:	Good

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

This is a good school.

- St Swithun's School is an outstanding example of a Catholic school community, where the mission statement and Christian ethos have a very positive impact. Excellent relationships between adults and pupils lead to a loving and trusting environment, where all are encouraged to live out their mission statement of '*Love one another as I have loved you*'.
- The personal faith, leadership and dedication of the headteacher provides the vision that continues to take the school forward.
- St. Swithun's is a school that knows itself well. The leadership team and governing body have an open and trusting relationship of challenge and support.
- The regular support of the parish priest is of great benefit to the school.
- The vast majority of parents, who responded to the survey, were very positive about all aspects of school life, one stated, "All staff live out the mission and you see it wherever you go in the school".
- Since the last validation, leaders in the school, including governors, have shown a strong commitment to improving standards in RE. Their efforts have been successful; standards are now good and there is potential for these to improve still further. Recent improvements have been very well led by the RE leader who provides very good support for staff and knows her subject well.
- Good quality teaching in RE inspires and challenges pupils, leading to good attainment and progress in this core subject. Relationships within and beyond the classroom enhance learning.
- Moral development is outstanding. Pupils are wonderful 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. Children said, "We need to talk about the message the Gospel gives us and put it into our own lives."
- Through a wide range of worship opportunities, the children are opened to God's presence in their lives and in the lives of others.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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

- Ensure the improvements in teaching and learning in RE are embedded across the school.
- Develop opportunities for pupils to study and apply the principles of Catholic social teaching throughout the curriculum and life of the school.
- Embed in upper Key Stage 2 and then extend to all year groups the recent move to pupils planning and leading aspects of their own worship, ensuring expectations are appropriate for the age of the children involved.

Full Report

The school as a Catholic community

The school community:	Outstanding
The wider community:	Outstanding

- The school's mission and Christian ethos permeates all aspects of school life, where every member is nurtured, valued and encouraged to recognise their responsibility to others, as one pupil stated, "One person can make the difference, as we learn from the Good Samaritan Parable - and we then can make all the difference to others".
- The school has highly positive relationships with the different groups that make up its community. Visitors acknowledge the warmth of the welcome that they receive.
- The parish priest is very supportive of the school through celebrating Mass, weekly visits delivering lessons, input into the newsletter, monthly assemblies, liturgies and supporting the Mini-Vinnies.
- The school effectively communicates with parents. There is a positive and trusting relationship between home and the school. One parent stated, "The parents feel that they belong to the school. It is a supportive family - they live out their mission every day".
- Pupils live out the mission in school life through a range of roles including prefects, Mini-Vinnies, school councillors, Language Ambassadors and School Monitors. The pupils value the opportunity that these roles afford.
- The school celebrates its cultural diversity - as highlighted by the 27 languages represented within the school - with Language Ambassadors leading such events as the recent Polish Independence Day celebrations, along with supporting new arrivals who have little English.
- All members of the school community demonstrate their commitment to the principles of stewardship through support of many local, national and international initiatives that mean a lot to the school, including Great Ormond Street, Wear a Hat Day and CAFOD. Pupils recognised charity fund-raising is linked to the school's mission statement.

Curriculum religious education

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

- The evidence in the pupils' books, the high quality teaching seen on the day and discussions with pupils all combine to show that attainment and progress in RE are good and improving.
- Pupils in the school value RE and recognise that it can help them in their daily lives. In the lessons observed as part of the validation, pupils were able to draw on knowledge of scripture and relate the messages to everyday life.
- Learning is supported by well organised environments, well-chosen resources and targeted support from teaching support staff. Effective use is made of working walls with key vocabulary, questions and children's responses evident.
- The children demonstrate a positive attitude to learning and show very good learning behaviours.
- At the time of the last validation RE was judged to require improvement. Strong leadership from the headteacher, governors, leadership team and RE subject leader have led to rapid improvement in standards.
- The hard work of the school RE leader has been a key factor in the improvement of RE. Key actions have included supporting teacher subject knowledge and refining planning.

- Teachers are committed to delivering RE that is engaging, focused on scripture and offering challenge. The children’s introduction to RE in the early years is strong and final outcomes by the end of Key Stage 2 show good progress has been made. The RE teaching would be further enhanced by the sharing of the stronger practice seen in early years and upper Key Stage 2.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are very supportive of RE. Governors contribute to the monitoring of the subject. Every effort is made to ensure that the subject maintains a high profile in all aspects of school life.

Spiritual and moral development

Spiritual development:	Good
Moral development:	Outstanding

- Prayer and worship are a part of the daily life of the school and members of the school community actively participate in the traditions and practices of the Catholic Church.
- Attitudes to worship demonstrate an open response showing a reverent connection with God. The school is currently developing greater pupil participation in leading prayer. Pupils are developing an active role in worship in the school through leading class prayer and with the Mini-Vinnies overseeing a lunchtime prayer room.
- Worship Books in class show a range of approaches to worship. Class prayers are linked to the liturgical season, and a balance is developing between adult and pupil class worship. There are also opportunities for children to record their own individual prayers in class.
- During the worships observed on the day key elements included, the creation of a spiritual and respectful atmosphere, thoughtful responses given to scripture and a sense of purpose in going forth.
- Children’s behaviour is exemplary. The school’s rewards, such as WOW certificates and Star of the Week reinforce a culture of high expectations and positive encouragement.
- Catholic social teaching is being developed by giving pupils opportunities to understand and discuss concepts such as poverty, freedom, rights and responsibilities in the stewardship of our world. Through curriculum and strategic planning this can be further strengthened.
- Pupils are proud of their school: “It is important to learn about Mission Heroes, hearing about what they have done and what message we can receive from them. We then try to put this into our own lives”.

Leadership and management: Good

- The personal faith and example of service and humility of the headteacher is providing the vision that takes the school forward.
- The governing body takes a keen interest in the mission, development and success of the school. It shows the capacity to meet the school’s needs and be influential in determining the strategic direction of the school. They are involved in evaluating the school, including Diocesan Self-Review, and in supporting and challenging the headteacher.
- Teachers and support staff are committed to supporting the school and work purposefully in their drive for improvement.
- Leaders routinely make good use of a range of monitoring activities relating to all aspects of RE and the Catholic life of the school.
- Progress has been made on the issues identified for improvement in the last validation, particularly in reviewing the school’s mission statement along with ensuring the delivery of high quality religious education (RE).
- The school provides effective induction and ongoing professional development for its staff.

School Details

Name of school	St Swithun's Catholic Primary School
URN:	116386
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll:	315
Chair of Governors:	Br Ben Foy
Headteacher:	Andrew Olive

St Swithun's Catholic Primary School is a larger than average school situated in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes and St Swithun and within the Portsmouth pastoral area. The proportion of pupils who are Catholic are 61%. It has a notable proportion of children of other faiths, 17%; 44% of pupils have English as an additional language and come from a variety of ethnic minorities. The proportion of children with special needs is in-line with most other schools. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average.

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

Louise Buxton	Lead validator
Juanita Dunlop	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 class worships and whole school assembly
- Observations of teaching and learning in RE, including joint learning walks
- Pupil work scrutiny.
- Feedback of key findings to the senior leadership team and a representative of the governing body.

Conclusion

The validators would like to thank the headteacher, staff, governors, parents and pupils of St Swithun'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.