



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and Inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
of the Education Act 2005

URN 101458

St Fidelis Catholic Primary School
Bexley Road
Erith Kent
DA8 3HQ

Inspection date: 16th May 2017

Chair of Governors:

Brother James Boner

Headteacher:

Mr Mark Hannon

Inspectors:

Mrs Catherine Green

Mrs Catharina Mayhew

EDUCATION COMMISSION

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR

Tel 01689 829331 Fax 01689 829255

Director of Education: Dr Anne Bamford

SECTION 48

Introduction

St Fidelis Catholic Primary School is a two-form entry primary in the Bexley Deanery, which is in the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is in the Bexley Local Authority. The parish church of Our Lady of the Angels is located next door and the majority of pupils are drawn from that parish. Almost all the pupils who attend the school are baptised Catholic.

The school takes pupils from 3-11, currently there are 472 pupils on roll. The number of pupils receiving free school meals at any time during the last six years is 16.7% which is below the national average. The number of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) is also below the national average.

The largest group within the school is Black African and the next largest cohort is White British. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an Additional Language (EAL) is above average at 43%

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school in providing Catholic Education

Grade
1

St Fidelis is an outstanding Catholic community where Gospel Values thread through every decision that is made. Governors and school leaders strive to create a climate where pupils succeed to the best of their ability, while also being supported on their faith journey. All members of this worshipping community know they are valued. Pupils are encouraged to show excellence in all their work and are expected to praise God through endeavour.

Decision making is shared and self evaluation is a key tool used in all aspects of school life. St Fidelis is an active participant in the Corpus Christi Partnership. The school's vision is shared via social media and through the parish and local community. Pupils at St Fidelis are articulate and spiritual with a faith fostered through regularly bearing witness. The broad and balanced curriculum is organised so that each child is able to express the joy of worship and the importance of tolerance and peace. This outstanding work has been developed through many years of strong leadership and an exceptional induction programme for all staff who are new to the school. The planned programme of assemblies focus on living a Christian life. Pupils are encouraged to discuss all aspects of this commitment and the recent focus on the local food bank has led to some searching questions from children about the nature of poverty and challenges faced by local people.

The Headteacher, supported by an able governing body, has a clear focus on raising the profile of St Fidelis and is able to articulate this vision well so that all staff understand the importance of the work carried out.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors Head teacher and staff should:-

- Further develop the partnership with parents and the wider community through using the Virtual Learning Platform (VLP) therefore keeping all aspects of religious work and worship alive and relevant.
- Keep a focus on maintaining the high standards in Religious Education through exploring different ways of learning and using a broad range of mediums.
- Build on the prayerful responses to meditation, to use this to further deepen all pupils' spiritual experience.

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.

Pupils respond enthusiastically in lessons, assemblies and in day to day interactions with staff. The Catholic ethos of the school underpins all aspects of the work carried out and pupils are confident representatives of the faith. For example, the recent parish First Holy Communion Mass was well attended by many pupils past and present. As the Head Boy stated, when he made his First Holy Communion, older children supported his special day so to him it was important to keep this tradition alive. The wider participation of the school community helped to make this day even more special.

Pupils were able to talk positively about the importance of a living faith. They are guided by staff and see the value of global learning and faith in action. An example of this is how pupils visit the local food bank to drop off donations. The school also supports CAFOD through fundraising, inviting in speakers and using resource materials for geography and Religious Education. Pupils responded confidently in assembly to the links made between Jesus as the Good Shepherd and the plight of refugees. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 explored what it was like to be homeless by taking part in a school sleepover. They had sleeping bags and were moved on by staff with some being refused food, thereby mirroring the encounters typical of those who are homeless. Experiences such as this provide the pupils with a clear view about the importance of social justice.

The school community has a very strong sense of moral purpose which is also evident in the Rights Respecting Award which the school has attained at Level 2. The Ambassador Group spoke confidently about what the award means and how it links to Gospel Values. This ethos was in evidence throughout the inspection in the attitudes of the pupils and used to inform displays so that the messages remain clear and ever- present.

St Fidelis has recently become an Arts Awards Centre and has also been awarded the Sainsbury's Goldmark for Physical Education. The school has also been recognised by Pearson as a centre for excellence in global education. These awards give witness to the commitment of the community to make the provision excellent in all aspects.

The school hosts an annual 'Grandparents' Day' celebrating the vital role that grandparents play in the lives of pupils today. 'Aspirations Day' is also a yearly event when all pupils are encouraged to think carefully about what they would like to become in the future. Parents and visitors are encouraged to attend these events.

Pupils are able to use a range of religious language in lessons and while discussing their school and are frequently given opportunities to take a lead in liturgies. They speak with confidence about how important living out their faith is to promote Gospel Values. All pupils are encouraged to be questioning and reflective as part of the school learning culture.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

Pupils generally make good progress in Religious Education from their starting points which are broadly average in relation to national measures. Results in Religious Education are in line with those in English and Maths. Pupils are evaluated through ongoing

assessment with formal assessment tasks completed three times a year. Pupil attainment is tracked termly and analysed. Teachers use this data in planning.

In lessons observed pupils were given tasks which challenged them. For example, using Bibles to locate appropriate texts and being given opportunities to develop religious language and understanding. Teacher questioning was thorough and provided further challenges where appropriate. Pupils worked collaboratively, demonstrating a clear awareness of how to respect others. They were generally absorbed and engaged by the tasks that were set.

Prayer is incorporated into all lessons. Even the youngest children, are taught to experience the importance of stillness in prayer. Meditation, has been introduced and is being well used to support pupils' spiritual development in some classes. The school should now build on this good practice and involve all pupils.

The written work seen in books was challenging and relevant to the topics and liturgical year, with thoughtful marking that the pupils responded to well. There were clear examples of differentiation and the pupils' use of religious language, both written and orally was exemplary. The work showed evidence of the highest standards of attainment and presentation. The books are sent home, several times a year, so that parents are well informed about the Religious Education in the school and how their children are progressing in the subject. These books are well loved and extremely well cared for with an attractive illustration on the outside and the key school prayer inside. Individual prayer journals are used by each pupil to support work in and beyond the lesson. These prayer books reflect the pupils' growing responses on their spiritual journey and have been carefully written in and illustrated over time.

Pupils told inspectors that Religious Education was a favourite subject that they enjoyed.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

The purposeful prayer focal area in each classroom, and the use of incense and candles, helped to give a very clear message about the importance of prayer. During lessons pupils were thoughtful during prayer time.

During the act of Collective Worship seen by inspectors, pupils responded with reverence and enthusiasm. While exploring challenging ideas about how Jesus is present in the way that people treat each other. Pupils participated in partner work and were also given the opportunity to reflect on the topic in silent stillness.

The school has invested in a bus, formally owned by the 'Christian Resources in Bexley Schools' (CRIBS), which serves as a space to celebrate other faiths as well as being a meditation space. The school's website and Twitter feed are used to support and inform of, Collective Worship and for the celebration of achievement in the school.

A planned timetable for Collective Worship helps to motivate pupils to fully participate in all the activities on offer. During the regular school Mass pupils take an active part in the liturgy of the Word, prayers of the faithful, altar service, prayerful worship and singing. Music is used to inspire the pupils.

Pupils showed reverence and thoughtfulness in all aspects of worship seen by the inspectors. School leaders were able to demonstrate clearly that themes and vocabulary from whole school assemblies flow throughout the school community and inspire the charitable work carried out by the school. The Sunday Mass, involving so many members of the school community are an outstanding witness to faith in action.

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How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leaders, managers and governors are dedicated to the Catholic life of the school. This is evidenced by the rich curriculum on offer and the fundamental commitment to making the school a vibrant place to learn. Governors at St Fidelis are expert critical friends to the leadership team and they have been awarded the Governor Mark. Governors and senior leaders provide support to other schools within the Deanery. The impact of this is that pupils are well supported by confident leaders who want the school to keep a fresh level of challenge. These leaders are able to self-reflect, keeping the Catholic life within the school as a top priority. They are dedicated to making sure that the Catholic ethos of the school remains a key strength.

Leaders plan liturgical events throughout the year which are celebrated in the church and school. An example of the way the process works in the school is the commitment to the parish based Holy Communion Programme. All members of the leadership team are involved in this process to enhance the Catholic life of the school.

Staff new to the school participate in an Induction Programme which includes an emphasis on Catholic ethos and teaching as a vocation. The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) on offer seeks to keep the expertise of the teachers at a level that supports the best teaching and learning throughout the school. The impact of this is the high-quality education that pupils receive. The Headteacher has engaged in pro-active partnership work with St Mary's University in Belfast and is using innovative ideas to secure Catholic teachers so that the ethos of the school is secured for the future. As a result of this sustained programme six Catholic teachers have been secured and the school is also supporting one Catholic School Direct Candidate.

The self-evaluation process is shared by leaders, governors and the Religious Education leader and this makes the review process very robust at St Fidelis. The leadership team and governors are well placed to continue to promote, monitor and enhance the Catholic life of the school.

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils

The governors receive regular updates from the Religious Education leader about assessment, tracking and standards. She is allocated time to carry out the monitoring role in the school. Governors also participate in sessions to monitor books and resources to make sure that all pupils are receiving the best possible Religious Education. As a result, governors are clear about standards within the school. Governors could discuss positively, and with some pride, the high standards and the amazing confidence displayed by the pupils.

At St Fidelis all teachers and teaching assistants are faith leaders. This is a huge strength as they receive specific training on the curriculum focus for each term which is provided by the Religious Education leader and the Parish Priest. There are termly meetings between the Religious Education leader and senior leadership team to analyse data. The Religious

Education leader regularly meets with her counterparts in the Corpus Christi Partnership for moderation and to share good practice. The shared classroom observations across the Corpus Christi Partnership mean that the school judgements receive outside verification and this helps leaders to be confident about the findings and judgements. Teachers plan in teams and these plans are carefully monitored by the leadership team. Governors visit regularly and help to inform decisions made. Precise advice is given and expectations are high. The Religious Education leader and senior leaders engage with the Diocese, through attendance at meetings and courses as well as yearly school visits to ensure that monitoring and assessment systems are secure.

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The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

All teaching seen during the inspection was good or better, with much of it being outstanding. This is in line with the school's own assessment of teaching and learning in Religious Education. The teachers sound religious knowledge along with a good understanding of pedagogy, ensures that teaching is secure. The books were marked in line with the school's policy, with clear next steps and a challenging provision of ideas. The expectations are that pupils will achieve as well, if not better, in Religious Education than in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils are given techniques to support learning; one of which is pose, pause, pounce and bounce (PPPB). This helps pupils to think through ideas and challenge themselves and others. The Religious Education provision supports the development of extremely self-assured learners.

Staff are given strong support by the Religious Education leader who works closely with the Parish Priest to outline the key liturgical terms. The Parish Priest has also led staff meetings on doctrine that staff members have found challenging but very helpful as a means of developing a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith and Religious Education curriculum. The school invests in planned programmes to support teaching and learning and all projects carried out are planned, executed, celebrated and then reviewed. The provision for Religious Education is thoughtfully organised so that pupils receive a rich provision. The school invests time in numerous awards to enhance the day to day provision and to keep the Religious Education curriculum alive and relevant.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning

Pupils are confident, interested and enthusiastic participants in Religious Education lessons who are given opportunities and the guidance to develop spiritually. Through scaffolds, effective challenge and appropriate expectations children achieve very high standards. Well planned and organised curriculum provision is driven by the Religious Education leader.

The school uses 'The Way The Truth and The Life' scheme which is adapted and supplemented as necessary in order to provide in depth coverage of topics and themes. which gives pupils opportunities to explore and question. Consequently, the foundations for knowledge are secure.

Pupils are given clear guidance about understanding how actions affect others through the excellent work developed on 'The Rights of the Child,' which the school links to Gospel Values. As a result, the children have had the opportunity to explain the importance of this way of working to a Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development (SMSC) Conference for other schools and organisations. The pupils are able to articulate the importance of these ideas assuredly and to witness the way that this impacts on children throughout the world. The purpose of this initiative is to encourage other schools to become Rights Respecting schools.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

The school provides high quality Collective Worship with a range of different experiences on offer. The Eucharist is the centre of celebrations in the school. The pupils participate in

liturgies, assemblies and Masses. The steel drums group, choir and liturgical dance group are used frequently to celebrate and worship. In particular, these groups are utilised during the monthly Sunday Mass, demonstrating how much the pupils want to celebrate and make worship a part of all that they do and say. This provision is very well thought out and carefully planned to engage as many pupils as possible. There is a joyful atmosphere about the whole school and each pupil seemed so confident and happy during the inspection. Pupils were keen to share all aspects of work and were confident ambassadors for the school.

The school has an excellent choir who lead worship and also participate in a friendly competition with other schools in the Corpus Christi Partnership. St Fidelis have been the most successful choir for a number of years celebrating the mission of the school which is "Compassion, Challenge and Excellence."

Parish school links are excellent and support the ethos of the school. The church is used as a resource and the pupils are welcomed. The work on meditation which is being developed by the school has also helped to focus on deepening spiritual thinking and each pupils' prayer life.

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