

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK  
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**



***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

Chair of Governors	Brother James Boner
Headteacher	Mr Mark Hannon
Inspectors	Mr Michael Sheridan
	Mrs Bernadette Long

Inspection date(s)                      23 January 2012

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# Introduction

## Description of the school

The school is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Bexley Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Bexley LA. The principal parish which the school serves is Our Lady of the Angels, Erith. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 96%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 9.5% in Key Stage 1, and 9.8% in Key Stage 2.

The school, including its nursery, takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 471. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly around average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Around 14.9% of the pupils receive extra support in class and 10 pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need. Most pupils are of White British (around 47%) or Black African heritage (around 38%). The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is below average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

# Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

St. Fidelis is an outstanding school. It is an inviting and welcoming community founded on the Gospel values of forgiveness, compassion, justice, acceptance and peace. The headteacher is an outstanding practitioner and role model, who works effectively with an able and dedicated governing body. The leadership of the school is committed to enabling all pupils to unlock their potential spiritually, academically and socially. The care the school provides for its pupils is excellent. The prayer life of the school is outstanding and makes a significant contribution to the spiritual and moral development of pupils. Leadership at all levels in the school successfully promotes community cohesion so that, supported by the religious education curriculum, pupils are aware of the importance their contributions make to the common good of society in their local and wider communities. Pupils are well behaved, polite and friendly. The overwhelmingly positive response to the parental questionnaire illustrates parents' appreciation of the school. One parent summed up the general feeling by commenting, 'Overall an excellent school which teaches good morals and values. I am so grateful my children attend the school.' Partnership between home, school and parish is a strength of the school. Achievement and standards in religious education are above average and pupils gain knowledge skills and understanding at a good rate across the Foundation Stage and both key stages. Teaching and learning in the subject are good, as is the use of technologies in engaging and extending pupils of all abilities. The religious education curriculum is good and provides a systematic study of God, the life and teaching of Jesus and the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold, the relationship between faith and life and other world religions. The religious education curriculum in the school makes a strong contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. The issues contained in the last report have been addressed. The honest and accurate self-evaluation demonstrates that the governors, headteacher and staff have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and have identified the areas for further development. The school has an excellent capacity to improve even further.

**Grade 1**

## **What steps need to be taken to improve further?**

The leadership of the school should:

- Continue to develop assessment for learning in religious education so that there is greater consistency in its application across the school and, in particular, marking which informs pupils of the next steps in their learning
- Monitor the planned intervention strategies for matching work to pupils' abilities and ensure that the good differentiated work evident in some pupils' religious education exercise books is consistently present at both key stages

# The Catholic life of the school

## Leadership and management

## Grade 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has a clear vision of the education he wishes the pupils to receive and of how he plans to see the school further develop. He works closely with the deputy head who offers him excellent support. The governing body works closely with the senior leaders to promote the Catholic ethos and makes a positive contribution to the strategic direction of the school. Governors act as critical friends to the senior leaders. They manage to maintain a good balance between support and challenge. For example, they rigorously monitor the progress of the school development plan and hold leaders to account over its implementation. The neighbouring Capuchin order of Franciscan friars is committed to serving the school by providing invaluable support to the school community through occupying a key role on the governing body and through chaplaincy. They make a significant impact on the Catholic life of the school. The local parish priest is also a member of the order. The caring ethos of the school is outstanding. The values of respect, co-operation and inclusion are evident in the relationships between all members of the school community and nurture the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. The distinctive Catholic nature of the school is evident from the religious icons, artefacts and displays around the premises. For example, all classes have crucifixes prominently displayed and attractive, interactive focal points draped in green to reflect the season of the Church's year. In particular, one focused on 'People who inspire us', recognising that our gifts and talents come from God, and included written work from pupils. Pictures and statues of the patron saint and of St Francis are also very evident around the school. The mission statement, which is prominently displayed in the school entrance and on the footer of all letters sent out by the school, ensures that the vision of the school is accessible to the school community. Pupils are very aware of the mission statement, 'Compassion, challenge, excellence: bringing children to Christ through education', and are able to recite it freely. During the inspection, this was reinforced in an assembly, with pupils signing the first three words. In a religious education lesson observed, pupils made reference to the words of the mission statement and were aware of its location in the school. The school undertakes a biennial review of the mission statement, which is shared with parents and pupils. St Fidelis is a UNICEF 'Rights Respecting' school where pupils' rights are embedded in the school's ethos and policymaking. Pupils' views are taken into consideration through the voice of the school council. As a result of their requests, amongst a number of other initiatives, this has led to a 'buddy swing' being installed in the playground and carols being sung by pupils in the local senior citizens' home. Good relationships with parents are fostered through meetings, newsletters, questionnaires and invitations to school events, assemblies and liturgies. Governors and senior leaders set a high priority on succession planning. A mark of the school's success since the last inspection is the number of its staff who have been promoted to senior leadership posts both within the school and in other schools. The school has strong links with the Diocese, with leadership at all levels regularly attending meetings and availing themselves of training offered by the Commission for Schools and Colleges.

## **Quality of provision for personal and collective worship**

**Grade 1**

Provision for collective worship at the school is outstanding. It is a key feature of the school and permeates all aspects of school life. It is underpinned by clear religious education and worship policies. The school works very hard to provide each person with a high quality experience of liturgy to support their own spiritual journeys. The priests and brothers from the neighbouring Franciscan friary are regular and welcome visitors to the school and their educational and pastoral contributions make a significant impact on the life of the community. One of the priests is the chair of governors and another is the school chaplain. The worship coordinator, religious education coordinator and chaplain work tirelessly together to ensure that the provision for personal and collective worship makes an outstanding contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. There is a comprehensive programme of Masses, liturgies and assemblies, which is rigorously monitored by the school's leadership. Acts of collective worship are excellent. They are linked to the liturgical year and to the religious education programme and pupils are actively involved. For example, pupils take part in Masses as servers, readers, members of the school's Key Stage choirs and liturgical dancers. In an outstanding whole school assembly observed, which was based on the gospel reading of the previous Sunday's Mass, the headteacher led the pupils to reflect upon what God has called them to be through the use of a thought-provoking PowerPoint presentation on Jesus calling his disciples, expert questioning, challenge, discussion between talk partners and quiet reflection time. All pupils were able to contribute. They sang in parts heartily and participated with reverence in prayer. Good use of technology was evident and enhanced both the delivery of the message and pupils' understanding. Provision for prayer and collective worship is inclusive. The response of pupils to worship and prayer is outstanding. They know many of the formal prayers of the Church understand the significance of the Mass and write reflective prayers in their prayer books.

## **Community Cohesion**

**Grade 1**

The school is inclusive and promotes community cohesion to an outstanding level. Leaders encourage respect for difference, value diversity and ensure equal opportunities for all. Pupils with special educational needs are valued by the school community and make good progress. Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Of particular note, the school employs a member of staff who supports children and families who are experiencing difficulties or bereavement. The home, school and parish partnership is outstanding and nourishes the pupils' personal development. Preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist takes place in the school but there is close liaison with the parish.

The school has developed strong links with schools in the Bexley Deanery partnership. They meet regularly and aim to further promote their schools' Catholic identity through greater collaboration and mutual support. As a result, the sharing of resources and opportunities for the schools to take part in joint, continuing professional development days have developed over the past two years. For example, the schools participated in succession planning workshops in the parish centre to respond to the need for schools to develop leaders at all levels. This excellent initiative will enable the school to build capacity for even further improvement in its Catholic life. The school works closely with the Catholic

secondary schools in the local authority by, for example, participating in an annual joint choral festival. The school also collaborates with schools which are not Catholic through the local authority cluster of schools. Parents speak highly of the school. During the inspection comments from parents included: 'The school is an excellent school which meets the needs of every individual child'; 'I feel my children's religious upbringing is well entrusted to the staff at St Fidelis with the help of both parents and parish'. The school reaches out to the wider community by forming links with schools abroad. There are established links with schools in Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, and South Africa to enrich pupils' understanding of children who live in other cultures. The school community generously supports a wide range of charities, including Children in Need, Barnardos, the Capuchin orphanage in Peru and CAFOD. Consequently, pupils are made aware of the important role they play in society, praying and caring for the well-being of others in communities locally, nationally and globally.

## Religious education

### **Achievement and standards in religious education**

**Grade 2**

Given pupils' starting points, attainment in the Foundation Stage and both key stages is high. Pupils settle quickly into learning in the Early Years and make good progress in religious education. Throughout Key Stage 1 pupils consolidate their learning and, given their initial capability, achieve good standards. This good progress continues throughout Key Stage 2 and, by Year 6, most pupils reach levels of attainment which matches national expectations and, moreover, a significant proportion exceeds them. Levels attained in religious education are broadly similar to those achieved in English and exceed the national expectation. Pupils are confident and articulate in discussions and respond to teachers' questioning, demonstrating good understanding. Pupils display a developing use of religious literacy. For example, one Year 5 pupil was able to explain the meaning of the gospel value 'forgiveness' by saying, 'If you don't forgive, you're not allowing the person to be themselves.' There is a very good work ethic in the school, pupils stay on task and make good progress in the subject during their lessons. As a result of the above, religious education makes a significant contribution to the moral, spiritual and social development of pupils.

### **Teaching and learning in religious education**

**Grade 2**

Teaching and learning in religious education is good with some outstanding features. During the inspection, the vast majority of pupils who were asked said that they enjoy religious education. This, together with the effective and skilled application of the behaviour management policy by the staff, leads to little or no disruption in religious education lessons. In lessons judged by the inspectors to be good or better, the pace was brisk with an effective balance between teacher and pupil input. Teachers acted as facilitators for learning by using skilful questioning techniques and productively employed well-briefed, learning support assistants. For example, in an outstanding Year 6 lesson, on the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the teacher presented three images by the artist Elizabeth Wang on the interactive whiteboard. Pupils were asked to decide which part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist each image represented and to discuss their ideas with talk partners. The teaching

assistant was gainfully employed in supporting a pupil with additional needs. The teacher then led them through highly skilful and sensitive questioning to feed back their ideas to the class and ensured that pupils of all abilities were empowered to participate. The pupils were asked to consider what gift they could offer to God and given time to discuss it in pairs. The conclusion of this activity led to a creative paralyturgy where pupils wrote their gift on a clothes peg. Then they all processed with reverence while quiet reflective music played and placed the pegs around the edge of a paper cross. As the lesson progressed, challenging activities which matched pupils' abilities were employed to provide them with appropriate deep learning opportunities. Teachers display confidence in their teaching styles due to their good subject knowledge and effective support from senior leaders. Lessons are based on 'The Way the Truth and the Life' religious education programme.

## **The religious education curriculum**

## **Grade 2**

The quality of the religious education curriculum is good. The school follows 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' religious education programme and has successfully adapted it to meets the needs of pupils in the primary phase of education, whilst fully complying with the Curriculum Directory guidelines. Investigation and reflection are key components, which equip them with the tools to respond to God's call in everyday life. The curriculum builds on the foundation laid at home. It is carefully coordinated with Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and the school's Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) programme, which are set in the context of Catholic teaching. Full advantage is taken of opportunities to develop pupils' skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Higher order thinking skills in the subject are fostered through, for example, the school's use of the Philosophy for Children programme and the Pupil Learning Council initiatives. At Key Stage 1, the curriculum time allocated to religious education is slightly below the Bishops' Conference and Diocesan requirements of 10% at 9.5%. However, at Key Stage 2 the school meets the requirements by providing two hours and thirty minutes for the subject each week. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards and of creative cross curricular links to enrich religious education. For example, music, geography, drama and art were all evident in lessons observed and used to good effect to stimulate pupils' learning. The religious education curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to study other world religions and this positively impacts on pupils' understanding and respect for other communities. This is reinforced through displays around the school. For example, a display on Judaism was on show in the hall during the inspection which supported the work pupils had completed in their books. The religious education curriculum is further enriched by extended curriculum time for prayer and worship opportunities, assemblies, liturgical and special celebrations. As a result, the curriculum makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils in the school.

## **Leadership and management of religious education**

## **Grade 1**

Leadership and management of the subject are outstanding. The religious education coordinator is a well-qualified and insightful leader and is a member of the senior leadership team. She is an outstanding practitioner and gives very effective support to her colleagues. School leadership views religious education as a core subject and is funded as such. The religious education action plan is robust,

derives from the school development plan and is focused on improvement. The matching of activities to pupil abilities in religious education is consistently applied in all teachers' planning. During the inspection there was evidence of some effective differentiation in pupils' books. This now needs to be applied consistently across both key stages. The school has rightly identified differentiation as a key priority in its school development plan. As governors and senior leaders monitor and evaluate the implementation of this priority in the subject, and continue to provide the support systems made available to other core subject areas, greater consistency across the key stages are sure to follow. Governors and senior leaders work together extremely well and monitor teaching and learning of the subject very effectively by means of the curriculum sub-committee, learning walks, lesson observations and work sampling. The religious education coordinator rigorously monitors teacher assessments and skilfully manages the moderation of assessment. As a result, there has been greater consistency in appraising pupils' levels of attainment within the subject and teachers feel more confident in the process. An impressive development within the Bexley Deanery partnership of schools is the introduction of joint moderation meetings in the subject, which has the potential of producing even greater accuracy in assessments. The coordinator oversees a robust pupil tracking system which makes a positive impact on pupils' attainment as underachievement, including those pupils who need to be challenged yet further, is identified and acted upon. Systems for tracking progress can be even further enhanced by, for example, using a 'traffic light' colour coding system for facilitating the identification of individual pupils in different progress categories. The coordinator manages the budget very well and the subject is very well resourced with a good range of books and age-appropriate Bibles to support pupils' learning in the subject.