

**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 118765

St Anselm's Catholic Primary School  
Littlebrook Manor Way  
Dartford  
DA1 5EA

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| Chair of Governors | Mr Peter Santer    |
| Headteacher        | Mrs Catherine Ward |
| Inspectors         | Mr Stephen Beck    |
|                    | Mrs Angela Ireland |

|                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| Inspection dates | 21 June 2011 |
|------------------|--------------|

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# Introduction

## Description of the school

Saint Anselm's Catholic Primary School is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Gravesham Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Kent Local Authority. The principal parish which the school serves is St. Vincent's, Dartford. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 76%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10% in all Key Stages.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 221. The attainment of the majority of pupils on entering the school is below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Around 32% of the pupils receive extra support in class. Approximately 40% of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is above average and rising.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

St Anselm's is a school that serves well, both academically and pastorally, a diverse community drawn from an area of high deprivation. Its Catholic ethos is explicit, as is the drive for the highest possible levels of attainment regardless of a child's starting point. There is a unity of purpose in this regard as expressed by all sections of the school community and this is a considerable strength of the school. The school works well in partnership with Catholic primary and secondary schools as part of the Gravesham Catholic Deanery of schools and these links are being extended through links with the Bexley Deanery. The school has regular links with the parish, working strongly and supportively together. There is also a close association with the nearby Cabrini Society Centre that has enabled the school to maximise provision for the extended day. As a result of these links the school is able to make exemplary provision available for pupils, a majority of whom have little opportunity for enrichment activities at home due to low aspirations and often inappropriate home resources or provision. As one parent stated, "The children receive a good foundation in the Catholic faith which develops them morally, socially and religiously into good Christians".

It is commendable how the school has preserved and delivered its vision throughout a significant period of staff turnover which has impacted on the school's senior leadership.

The last inspection identified the school as being 'particularly successful in providing care, guidance and support for its pupils', and this continues to be an outstanding feature of the school. This links well to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, which is likewise a very strong feature of what the school sees as its mission. At the time of the last inspection the school had recently introduced a new religious education scheme, 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' and it is pleasing to note how well this has been integrated into both the religious education curriculum and more widely through cross curricular links. The school has identified, and the inspectors concur, that the time is right to look to further develop assessment opportunities in religious education which follows on well from the recommendations for this area in the last inspection report. St Anselm's makes very good Catholic educational provision. It is a secure, inclusive, supportive, welcoming community in which pupils are respected, affirmed and supported, providing a positive climate for work in which pupils are encouraged to be confident and have confidence in themselves. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in each key stage. The school provided a clear and detailed self evaluation pre-inspection form which the inspectors found confirmed an accurate and in depth analysis of the schools current position. The school maintains an ongoing strong capacity to further improve.

**Grade 1**

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

- Continue to develop assessment procedures to embed current moderation and levelling of pupils' work and ensure this informs all teachers' planning to further raise standards.
- The school could consider developing its website to more widely celebrate the school's strong religious education curriculum.
- The governors might consider it an appropriate time to develop a specific policy covering the school's approach to sex education, in consultation with staff and parents, with a view to detailing a whole school cross curricular policy with reference to the 'Diocesan Policy for Education in Human Love'.

## **The Catholic life of the school**

### **Leadership and management**

### **Grade 1**

There is a strong sense of collegiality across the whole school which undoubtedly contributes to its success. The leadership and management of St Anselm's remains outstanding and is the result of a clarity of vision, a clear and shared understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, high levels of respect and mutual trust and a view that success is the only option. The headteacher remains the driving force, but she receives excellent support from her senior team and a governing body of significant strength. It is notable how a range of issues over recent years, including a changing demographic profile, has been so well managed that they are not and do not become an issue for the school. With the headteacher soon to retire, it is notable that succession planning has secured a strong team to support the new incumbent in September. The school's Mission Statement is a living document that receives a high profile around the school, is at the centre of all documentation and is lived out by staff and pupils both during the school day and beyond. This sees a strong promotion of the Catholic faith through cross curricular links that support extremely well the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of the pupils' education. School improvement plans clearly identify religious education priorities reflecting the priority the school gives to this area. The school gives very good support to the parish sacramental preparation programme. The parish priest is extremely supportive of the life of the school. He is a regular visitor to the school and engages with staff and pupils, thereby securing a good knowledge of religious education within the school. He provides an informative link with the governing body for this curriculum area. Governors are engaged in the Catholic life of the school, with the parish Deacon acting as a mentor for new governors.

The school fulfils its statutory obligations with regard to worship, Prayer and worship is central to the life of the school. There is a varied programme of assemblies and liturgies. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and are active in maintaining a climate of mutual respect in keeping with the school's ethos. Liturgies at St Anselm's are special occasions and valued by all. Liturgies begin with a period of 'tuning in' where pupils are encouraged to become still and prepare themselves to hear the Word of God. Pupils are given time to reflect during and at the end of liturgies and assemblies. The school has a strong focus on developing pupils' independence, encouraging them to take responsibility for their own actions, to know the impact bad choices can have on others and to reflect on the negative aspects of their behaviour and how these can be improved. It was impressive in a Year 2 to Year 6 assembly attended, how quietly pupils entered the hall, creating a reverent atmosphere reflecting the importance they placed on this aspect of school life. This celebration on the challenging topic of the Holy Trinity, led by the Headteacher, provided a period of true 'awe and wonder' that saw the pupils fully engaged throughout. Excellent singing both accompanied and unaccompanied, with signing, provided an added dimension that enhanced the celebration greatly. Pupils were engaged in the breaking down of the word trinity reflecting on 'Tri' and 'Unity'. The example of a Celtic symbol with no beginning or end, greatly supported understanding through a child physically tracing round the symbol with others tracing it in the air and on their hands. The use of scripture and prayer was well woven into the liturgy including some spontaneous bidding prayers and periods of reflection. Very good links were made with the previous Sunday's Gospel reading and Mass responses. In a reception and Year 1 assembly, the pupils sat in a semi-circle and the religious education co-ordinator led an age appropriate act of worship on the topic of the parable of the sower. Excellent use of picture prompts was made to recall the story and draw on pupils' own experiences. At the end of the assembly they were invited to reflect on "What kind of person would you like to be?" The pupils were able to engage in spontaneous prayer and many prayed for each other and their teachers. The pupils sang to a high standard and knew the Liturgy of the Word responses.

The parish priest celebrates a weekly Mass in school for pupils in Year 2 to 6 with more age appropriate weekly joint liturgies for reception and year 1 pupils which are much appreciated by all. The explanations he gives during these celebrations helps to heighten pupils' understanding of the Mass and their knowledge of Mass responses. Pupils have a well developed sense of liturgy as a result. This is further expanded through opportunities for them to take the lead and prepare their own liturgical celebrations. The school supports the parish through Masses on the first Sunday of each month, with teachers preparing weekly liturgies. During Lent, all pupils lead the parish in Stations of the Cross each Friday after school. They also prepare these celebrations as Lenten assemblies. Pupils in Year 3 to 6 have regular opportunities throughout the year to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in both school and the church. Sacramental programmes are parish based, with the First

Communion programme being spread over two years to include an initial Bible Study programme. Whilst parents were highly supportive of the programme some felt it was difficult to sustain their children's commitment over this period of time. The school organises a post First Communion celebration to coincide with the Feast of Corpus Christi. All classes have prayer focus areas. The school could consider revisiting these in order to give them greater visibility within the classroom and make them more inter-active.

## **Community Cohesion**

## **Grade 1**

The school addresses very effectively the cohesiveness of its own community, where both pupils and staff see themselves as role models for each other. Community cohesion is explicitly represented in displays of work around the school, exemplified at the time of the inspection by two striking displays. One in the main entrance represented each child as part of a jigsaw that made up the whole school. This included cut outs of jigsaw pieces with a child's photograph on each. In another display pupils had chosen and written about celebrities who would make good UNICEF ambassadors. This produced many well thought out views on celebrity status. Pupils are able to articulate the meaning of community cohesion and have a clear understanding of its application in their lives. They related it to day to day interaction with each other and in the wider context of interfaith links, cultural mix and in the school's active charity fundraising programme, including fundraising for the twinned Parish community in Peru and long term support for CAFOD and the Cabrini Society. The links the school has recently made with two African schools, one in Malawi and one in Ethiopia, is already increasing pupils' awareness and understanding of contrasting communities in a global sense and will in due course give them direct contact through regular correspondence. Pupils are aware of world deprivation, its causes and the potential impact of Fair Trade. The teaching of other faiths is successfully incorporated within the religious education curriculum. The school has supported this programme by arranging for the parents of another faith to work with their child's class, heightening pupils' understanding in this area. It has also expanded its programme which now includes Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and the Hindu faiths, as these particularly represent their local communities. A recent external visit to a Sikh Temple was highly successful, as was the opportunity pupils received to build a model of a mosque. The school is commendably well resourced in this area. This adds strongly to pupils awareness of the obligations of being a good citizen, their understanding of cultural awareness and the development of social and emotional skills through role play and story. The school correctly sees itself as the main contact with the Church for a significant majority of pupils and its strong partnership with the Parish makes a significant impact in this respect. Care, guidance and support provided by the school is excellent. Pupils with extra needs or who are vulnerable and their parents, are exceptionally well supported by the school. Strong links have been formed with the local community. As one parent wrote, "I feel the values and caring ethos that this school has given my children will stay with them for the rest of their lives". The school has a family support worker who is part of the local community

network and her links are an asset to the work the school does in this area. As part of an annual programme the school organises Multicultural, Multi-faith, and 'Make Poverty History' and Heritage weeks. In its own self evaluation the school stated, 'We believe our school is good at promoting community cohesion, pupil contribution to the community, equal opportunities and the way the school tackles discrimination'. The inspectors share this view and believe the school's practice in this area to be outstanding.

## Religious education

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

### **Grade 2**

Pupil attainment on entering the school is generally below national expectations. Pupils make good progress at every level and by the end of Key Stage 2 attainment is at least average and sometimes above. Attainment in religious education compares favourably with literacy and in some respects is better. This applies to pupils from other faith backgrounds and equally to boys and girls. Pupils are developing a good religious vocabulary at every level. Many can articulate their thoughts and ideas about what they have learnt and willingly share these in lessons. Teachers lead by example and as a result pupils are well able to relate their lessons to their own life experiences. Pupils make good use of skills gained in other curriculum areas such as literacy, art, design technology and information communication technology. They have produced some good PowerPoint presentations relating to their work on Easter and were effusive about the opportunities to use practical approaches in this area from even a young age. The co-ordinator reported that the use of an approach known as "Mantle of the Expert" generated construction of model Mosques in a Reception class as part of their study of other faiths. This encouraged cooperative working, research, independence and much enjoyment. A parent wrote about a time when visiting the school, ".....and one of the older children just came over and helped without even being asked. This is a great school and my child loves to come here. He is getting a great start in life". The presentation of pupils' work in books across the school is good and is presented in a variety of interesting ways. Pupils clearly value these books and take pride in what they have achieved. Pupils enjoy their lessons. In all lessons attended behaviour was exemplary as it was around the school. Pupils work well independently and collaboratively and have an unusually strong knowledge of scripture stories which helps them in the understanding of what they are learning.

Pupils achieve both personally and academically due to the good and sometimes outstanding teaching. Lessons are well prepared and resourced and teachers make good use of 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' planning sheets. Teaching is enhanced by teachers' own input rather than reliance on scheme materials. Aims and objectives are shared with pupils and revisited during lessons. Pupils are excited by the opportunities they receive in their religious education to do "fun things" like role play, drawing and debating. Teaching is supported by excellent classroom management, teachers' good rapport with pupils, a variety of activities within lessons and an appropriately age related pace. Teaching is marked by teachers' strong subject knowledge and opportunities provided to pupils to explore, research and discuss topics in a learning environment that is well balanced between teacher led and pupil initiated learning. The religious education curriculum is well linked to and supported by, the school's use of SEAL materials, opportunities for circle time and the pupils' roles to support each other such as Peer Mediation.

In a Reception class, pupils received a mock letter asking them to design a new church. They looked at a slide show of their visit to the church, about which they demonstrated good knowledge, in order to help them in their designs. They were given a clear idea about what they might do and set about the task with great enthusiasm. It was notable in a Year 1 lesson on the parable of the Good Samaritan, how well the pupils used talk partners to consider ideas about helping people who are different. The pupils undertook some interesting role play on the topic, in which the teacher actively participated as she did in the lesson plenary. In a Year 2 class, pupils were able to talk about St Peter in response to the question, "What do you know about St. Peter?" Much was drawn out of the pupils through teachers' good classroom management and strong question and answer skills which are reflected across the school. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils had to guess who they were to be learning about by drawing a number of articles out of a bag. One artefact was a scroll which prompted a discussion about 'special messages'. The discussion moved on to St Peter as the first pope with one child remarking that, "If Peter had not taken on the role there would be no churches, no Christians and Father Pat would be out of a job" It was impressive to see how well Year 5 pupils designed a liturgy with a strong thread of cooperation and mutual respect operating as they listened to and considered each others ideas. The theme centred on other faiths and built on good prior knowledge. As part of work on the 'Gifts of the Holy Spirit' Year 6 made a spirit stick of their own while reflective music played. In this lesson the teacher made excellent use of her own experiences and links with everyday life. Pupils had moved on in their understanding by the end of the lesson, helped by a good mix of activities. All of the lessons seen were characterised by high level classroom management, a good rapport with pupils, the setting of clear, high expectations and a range of teaching strategies including well prepared use of interactive whiteboards. Good examples of interactive marking are evident and pupils are provided with opportunities to make a response, which they do.

Classroom support assistants make a significant impact on pupils' learning because they are well prepared and empower the pupils with whom they are working. Assessment is progressing well. The co-ordinator has correctly identified the need to link planning with assessment and staff are currently engaged in this process.

## **The religious education curriculum**

## **Grade 2**

In line with national guidance 10% of the timetable is devoted to religious education but it is not taught in isolation and quite correctly underpins the life of the school. The school's adoption of 'The Way, The Truth and The Life', programme some three years ago has revitalised religious education throughout the school. It successfully builds on prior attainment and on the foundation of home, relating well to pupils' experiences. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of projects, visits and visitors to support a creative curriculum which rigorously promotes pupils' all round development. Consequently, pupils thoroughly enjoy their religious education work and fully participate in lessons. The programme for Education for Personal Relationships provides excellent opportunities for spiritual and moral development and is firmly rooted in Catholic tradition. Parents would benefit from more information, in line with Diocesan guidelines, about the sex education aspect of this area of their children's learning. The school may feel the time is appropriate to review the policy covering this curriculum area.

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

## **Grade 1**

Leadership and management of religious education were deemed to be excellent at the time of the last inspection and remain so. The school benefits from a very proactive religious education co-ordinator who leads by example and ensures religious education is never seen as less than a core subject. Her key strategic position on the school's leadership team helps to ensure that religious education is held first and foremost in the life of the school. Through her now well established annual programme of monitoring, that includes, the monitoring of planning, lesson observations, learning walks and the leading of staff in the moderating of pupils' work, has seen end of year progress tables replaced with tracking grids. These have resulted in her having a strong understanding of the strengths and areas for development in religious education. She is a thoughtful practitioner who has a clear view as to how to move assessment within her subject forward. This is continuing to have a significant impact on the raising of attainment. The Governing Body is well informed through its Learning Development Committee and the involvement of the parish priest who is actively involved in supporting religious education at St Anselm's. Resource provision is well organised and managed to match the needs of the curriculum and is effectively deployed in a stimulating and energising school environment. Religious education policy documentation and record keeping are substantial and very well presented. Parents felt they were well informed about their children's religious education and that as a result they could offer their children support in this area. Staff are very well

supported through a regular programme of in-service training and support from the co-ordinator. This includes Inset days, staff meetings and staff initiated support delivered on an individual basis, through small groups or whole staff as appropriate. The co-ordinator regularly attends Deanery, Diocesan and cluster meetings. Recently the teaching of other faiths has been successfully developed as a result of her leadership. She has, in conjunction with the management team, established a strong staff team for religious education which works well collaboratively, delivers high quality religious education and is committed to creating an exciting learning environment that impacts very positively on the educational and spiritual experiences afforded to pupils. Pupils' work is celebrated through displays, in individual and class books and through broad opportunities for work sharing. At every opportunity she works hard to ensure that every child has involvement in liturgies and assemblies, ensuring all feel involved. The coordinator has established a very clear educational direction for the subject through well documented policies, practices, sharing of the school's mission statement and an emphasis on a core set of values. These are evident in the Religious Education and Collective Worship and Prayer policies. The opening statement in the Collective Worship and Prayer Policy marks out the school as it states; "St Anselm's Catholic Primary School is a community of faith in itself and is part of the wider parish community of St Vincent's Dartford. As such its worship of God has a central place in the life of our school community. This worship is expressed through daily prayers, school liturgies, assemblies and school and class Masses".