

DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH VALIDATION REPORT



St Edmund's Catholic Primary School, Abingdon

Radley Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 3PP

URN 123225
 Date of previous validation June 2009
Date of this validation date 10 and 17 November 2014

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

This is a good school.

- St Edmund's Catholic Primary School is a good example of a school that works hard to 'learn, love and pray'. Throughout the school there is firm evidence that you are in a faith-filled community.
- The personal witness to the faith, provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, provides a strong vision and direction for the work of the school. The school leadership, including governors, are fully committed in their drive for continuing improvement.
- Religious education (RE) has a core place in the life of the school. The subject is clearly valued by staff, governors, parents and children.
- The evidence in the pupils' books, the good quality teaching seen on the day and discussions with pupils all combine to show attainment and progress in RE are good. Pupils enjoy the subject and appreciate how it can help them in their daily lives.
- The hard work and commitment of the staff to moving forward is a strength of the school.
- In the school a varied range of worship is offered, which provides children with good quality opportunities to develop their relationship with God. The worship observed during the validation was of a high quality.
- The children in the school exhibit very good behaviour and Christian attitudes. They are thoughtful and reflective, demonstrating the school's very good provision for their spiritual, social and cultural development. Moral development is outstanding.
- The links with the parish are very good and mutually supportive.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. A large majority was positive about all aspects of school life.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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

- Ensure that there is consistency across all year groups with regard to the provision of a range of differentiated activities, linked to the national RE levels of attainment, to ensure that pupils are challenged appropriately.
- Review the school mission statement and motto with the whole school community and as part of the embedding of the revised statement explore ways to link it into the everyday life of the school, for example, linking it more explicitly with the school's rewards and sanctions.
- Further enhance communication with parents and parish, paying particular attention to sharing and celebrating the school's Catholic ethos.

Full Report

The school as a Catholic community

The school community: Good

The wider community: Good

- Throughout the school there is firm evidence that you are within a community of faith. Particularly strong examples include:
 - The warmth of the welcome received by visitors.
 - The high quality of the central displays and artefacts linked to the school's Catholic life, for example, displays linked to harvest and St Edmund of Abingdon.
 - The very good relationships between all members of the school community.
 - The obvious care given to ensuring that the school environment is maintained to a very good standard and is used well to enhance the liturgical life of the school.
- The mission statement has not been reviewed for a number of years and the school regularly uses the motto, '... every day we learn, love and pray.' alongside of it. With the recent appointment of a new headteacher it would be beneficial to review both and agree a single statement that would give direction to both adults and children. At the same time thought should be given how it can best be woven more explicitly into the day to day life of the school.
- The links between the parish and school are very good and mutually supportive. Good examples are the weekly attendance by a key stage 2 class at a parish Mass, invitation to events and welcome offered to parishioners, and future plans to have a joint mission week led by the Sion Community. The parish priest provides good support to the school.
- The school communicates effectively with parents, ensuring that they are kept up to date with what is happening and are given many opportunities to visit and participate in the life of the school. However, communication needs to be monitored to ensure the school's Catholic identity is well represented, for example, RE should feature prominently in class letters and the Catholic life of the school could feature more frequently in the headteacher's monthly newsletter.
- The school is an active member of the diocesan family of schools and is seeking to develop closer links with its local Catholic cluster. This will bring mutually positive results for both the school and cluster.
- Members of the school community demonstrate their commitment to the principles of stewardship, through their support of a range of charities, including CAFOD and NSPCC.
- New families are warmly welcomed into the school. This is followed by ongoing support to ensure all families are quickly made to feel part of the school community.

Curriculum religious education

Attainment and progress: Good

Quality of teaching: Good

Leadership and management of RE: Good

- The evidence in the pupils' books, the good 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 it can help them in their daily lives. In the lessons observed as part of the validation, evidence was seen of pupils reflecting on what makes a saint, identifying key aspects in the lives of saints, applying Scripture and initiating their own learning. In the best lessons, learning was supported and challenged by the use of key questions and differentiated activities. Pupils demonstrated a positive attitude to learning and behaviour was very good.
- Most pupils are able to demonstrate their learning in RE through a range of strategies. The school now needs to embed effective, consistent and sustained differentiation for all pupils,

especially those working at the higher level, to ensure they make more rapid progress and enjoy greater achievement.

- Good quality interactive RE displays both support and celebrate learning in the subject.
- The school has worked hard to develop the use of assessment, based on the national levels of attainment. Formative marking is being increasingly used to develop pupils' understanding. Teachers work very hard to ensure there are examples of children's work for every RE topic. However, they need to ensure that the work evidences the RE learning outcome and that marking both affirms and moves learning forward.
- The leadership and support provided by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and RE governor help to ensure that the place of RE in the school is given a high status. The RE subject leader and headteacher monitor standards in RE, through observing teaching, pupil conferencing and work sampling. As the school extends its links with the local Catholic cluster of schools regular moderation of planning and pupils' work should be included as a regular feature.
- The school's RE policy needs to be updated to bring it into line with current practice.

Spiritual and moral development

Spiritual development:

Good

Moral development:

Outstanding

- The school provides a wide range of good quality worship, which allows individual and collective members of the school community to express their relationship with one another and with God in a reflective and prayerful manner. The school embraces opportunities to nurture spirituality and give Christian witness; these include:
 - Celebration of the school's patron saint;
 - The support given to pupils who wished to set up and run their own prayer group. This has proved both popular and of a good quality;
 - Joint celebrations with the parish, for example, weekly and termly Masses, Christingle.
- The children do not currently plan or lead their class worships. This is something that the older children would welcome the opportunity to experience and thought should be given to training them in this important ministry. They should then be encouraged to model this in other classes and train younger pupils in planning and leading on an increasing number of elements.
- The children in the school demonstrate very good behaviour and Christian attitudes in their relationships, with a clear sense of right and wrong. Groups of pupils take on key responsibilities throughout the school, including school councillors and buddies. The school council were very involved in the school's successful move to providing and cooking its own hot school meals.
- Pupils are thoughtful and reflective, demonstrating the school's very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They describe their school as a place where 'everyone is kind, and loving towards one another, follow God and have healthy dinners'.

Leadership and management:

Good

- The personal witness to the faith provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher provides a strong vision and direction for the work of the school. All those in a position of leadership are committed to developing and living the Christian ethos of the school.
- The school has an effective approach to the monitoring and evaluation of aspects relating to the Catholic life of the school.
- The governing body is a strong supporter of the school and also holds them to account. Governors are kept informed of developments in RE and the Catholic life of the school, however the reports provided need to ensure that they are sufficiently detailed and analytical to give governors a clear picture of key strengths and areas for development.
- Progress has been made on the issues identified for improvement in the last validation, particularly in moving forward its work on assessment in RE.

School details

Name of school	St Edmund's Catholic Primary School
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll:	244
Chair of Governors:	Carole Sawyers
Headteacher:	Maria Delany-White

St Edmund's Catholic Primary School is situated within the parish of Our Lady and St Edmund of Abingdon. Currently 66% of the pupils are Catholic, with a further 25% from other Christian traditions. An increasing percentage of pupils have English as an additional language and come from a variety of ethnic minorities. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national 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

Robert Dare	Lead Validator
Jacqueline Davies	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 collective worship.
- Observations of teaching and learning in RE, including joint observations with members of the school leadership team.
- Pupil work scrutiny.
- Feedback of key findings.

Conclusion

The validators would like to thank the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff, governors, the parish priest, parents and pupils of St Edmund'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.