

DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH VALIDATION REPORT



St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Gipsy Lane, Bracknell, Reading, Berkshire RG12 9AP

URN: 110027

Date of previous validation 19 November 2013

Date of this validation 28 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Previous validation:	Outstanding
	This validation:	Outstanding

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

This is an outstanding school.

- The school's mission statement, '*We are growing together on our journey of achievement with Jesus in our hearts, heads and hands*' permeates the life of the school, with all members of the community taking an active part in aspiring to live it out.
- The Catholic ethos is evident throughout the school, where a warm welcome, positive relationships, thoughtful displays, religious artefacts, and indoor and outdoor prayer areas all contribute to place Christ at the centre of the community.
- Leaders provide a very strong and highly effective model of Christian leadership, where all are valued. They inspire the community to share in a strong sense of vision and mission.
- Pupils are outstanding ambassadors for the school and speak about their school with pride. Their outstanding attitudes to learning are underpinned by their knowledge and living out of the school's mission statement.
- Religious education (RE) is central to the life of the school. Teaching of RE is outstanding over time. As a result, pupils make very good progress and achieve highly.
- The dedicated RE leader provides outstanding support. As a result, standards in RE have shown significant improvement over the past 12 months.
- All in the school recognise their Christian responsibility to reach out to those in need not only through fund-raising but also quietly to those in the school community who need support. One child commented, '*God wants us to treat others in the way Jesus did.*'
- The parish priest offers very good support to staff and pupils. The links between school and parish are strong and mutually supportive.
- Spiritual and moral development are outstanding. Pupils are provided with a wide range of spiritual opportunities and provide a Christian witness within the parish and local community. The children in the school show outstanding behaviour and Christian attitudes, giving of their time and talents to support those in need, of particular note is the impact of the Mini-Vinnies.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. A very large majority was positive about all aspects of school life, particularly the importance placed on RE and the strength of the relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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

- Ensure all pupils, but particularly the most able, are given regular opportunities and sufficient time to demonstrate their understanding in RE to a greater depth.
- Ensure the outcomes from the monitoring carried out in RE is shared with the governing body in order to enable them to better fulfil their role in holding the school to account in relation to RE and its Catholic life.

Full Report

The school as a Catholic community

The school community:	Outstanding
The wider community:	Outstanding

- The moment you enter St Joseph's you are aware that you are joining a strong Christian community where its mission statement is lived out on a daily basis. The school has a calm and welcoming atmosphere. Relationships within the school community are strong and children respond openly and with confidence. Throughout the school there is clear evidence of its Catholic nature.
- There are very good systems of communication, ensuring all stakeholders are well-informed and regularly updated. The school's website and fortnightly newsletter reflect the importance placed on the Catholic life of the school.
- A very strong partnership exists between the school and local parish. The parish priest is a fervent supporter of the school and is a regular and welcomed visitor. He sees the school as pivotal to the life of the parish. A key feature is the attendance at a weekday mass by a small number of pupils. This is followed by joining parishioners for a soup lunch. This is greatly valued by parishioners and the school community.
- The school is keen to give Christian witness in the local area, for example, supporting the suggestion to move the annual Carol Service outside the church in order to involve the local community in the celebration.
- St Joseph's is an active member of the local partnership of Catholic schools. The headteacher is currently acting as executive headteacher for another Catholic primary school, and the RE leader is also supporting the school - joint staff training and sharing of expertise are positive outcomes of this partnership. Links with other Catholic schools, particularly St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School, are also strong and mutually supportive.
- Pupils in the school, particularly the *Mini-Vinnies*, recognise the importance of reaching out to those in need. Adults are also aware of their Christian responsibility to support others, particularly those in difficulty in their own community and do this quietly and sensitively, often in partnership with the local parish.
- The embedding of Catholic Social Teaching is evident and the school has plans to take this further. It is currently working towards the first level of the Oscar Romero Award.

Curriculum religious education

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

- The evidence in pupils' books, the quality of teaching, the high levels of achievement and discussions with pupils all combine to show that attainment, progress and teaching in RE are outstanding. To ensure this is fully secure, the school needs to enable all pupils, but particularly the most able, to demonstrate their understanding in RE to a greater depth.
- On the day of the validation children demonstrated high levels of subject knowledge and familiarity with the organisation of the Bible. Some were able to reflect at greater depth on the meaning for themselves or others in the passage being studied.
- Planning is comprehensive and has a clear RE focus. Regular setting of homework for RE effectively supplements the class work. Feedback and marking in RE is in line with the school's policy and is effective in deepening children's learning.
- Pupils demonstrated a very positive attitude to learning in the lessons observed. A pupil survey show they have a high regard for RE.
- Teaching assistants play a key role in helping all pupils access the curriculum.

- Pupils are taught respectfully about the key features of other faiths, particularly their similarities with Christianity. Members of the community from other faiths are invited to share their experiences and practice with the children.
- The RE leader's passion and drive underpin her very good support for all staff, enabling them to deliver RE lessons with confidence and enthusiasm.
- The RE leader and the headteacher regularly monitor RE, through observations of teaching, pupil conferencing and work sampling. Outcomes of this monitoring would benefit from a greater focus on the quality of learning seen and the support needed to improve outcomes further. These to then be shared with the governing body in order to enable them to better fulfil their role in holding the school to account in relation to RE and its Catholic life.

Spiritual and moral development

Spiritual development:	Outstanding
Moral development:	Outstanding

- The school provides a wide range of high-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 every opportunity to nurture spirituality, these include:
 - The range of celebrations linked to the liturgical year.
 - Regular celebration of the Eucharist both within the school and the local parish.
 - The internal and external 'prayer stops' maintained by the *Mini-Vinnies*.
 - The joint retreats held with St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School.
- In all classes children take on various roles within class worship. By the time they reach upper key stage two, pupils are regularly planning and leading their peers in class worship, with the house captains doing this for the whole school.
- On the day of the validation outstanding practice seen included the reverent attitude of the pupils, a clear focus on scripture and the involvement of those participating.
- The children in the school demonstrate outstanding behaviour and Christian attitudes in their relationships, with a clear sense of right and wrong. Key factors promoting this include:
 - The outstanding role models provided by the staff and older children in the school.
 - The opportunities to consider their role as global citizens and their Christian responsibility to be stewards of God's Creation.
 - The consistent reinforcement of Gospel values and their application in helping children make the right choice. The school's reward system, for example, the weekly awarding of the gold tie, is linked to the school's mission statement. A child explained, '*The gold tie is for behaviour that brings you and others closer to God.*'
- The children take on a variety of leadership roles, for example, house captains, *Mini-Vinnies*, welcome monitors, and buddies to younger children, and through these provide very good role models to the other pupils in the school.

Leadership and management: Outstanding

- The headteacher's leadership impacts positively on all aspects of the life of this highly successful school and outstanding faith community.
- Within the school, and across all levels of leadership, including governance, there is a constant drive for improvement and insistence on high standards in all areas.
- Although the school complies with the requirements of the diocesan self-review process, the quality and detail of the reporting around RE and the Catholic life of the school needs improving; this will enable governors to better fulfil their role in holding the school to account in these core aspects of a Catholic school.
- Good progress has been made on the issues identified for improvement in the last validation, particularly in extending children's understanding of the wider world.

School details

Name of school:	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll:	210
Chair of Governors:	Paul Sutton
Headteacher:	Juanita Dunlop

St Joseph's is a very popular and over-subscribed Catholic primary school situated in the Parish of St Joseph and St Margaret Clitherow, Bracknell. It is an average sized primary school situated in attractive and well-utilised grounds. The ethnic composition of the school has changed since the previous validation in 2013 with an increase in both the range of ethnic backgrounds and the number of pupils with English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or in the care of the local authority, for whom the school receives additional funding (the pupil premium), is below the national average. A very high percentage of pupils in the school are Catholic, with only a small percentage of pupils coming from other faiths or no faith backgrounds.

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 directors/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

Lead Validator: Robert Dare
Assistant Validator: Roxy Ashworth

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, who is also the RE leader, staff, governors, parish priest, parents and pupils of St Joseph'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.