



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 **Infants 1029927**
 Juniors 1029926

The Federation of St Elphege's Catholic Schools
Mollinston Drive
Roundshaw
Wallington
SM6 9HY

Inspection **26th May 2016**
date:

Chair of Governors:	Mr Tom Tamplin
Headteacher:	Mrs Frances Hawkes
Inspectors:	Dr Janet Croggon
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EDUCATION COMMISSION

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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St Elphege's Infant and Junior Schools were federated in 2006 and in 2014 welcomed a third school into the Federation. The Federation is situated in the Sutton Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark and is maintained by the Sutton Local Authority. The principal parish that the school serves is St Elphege's, Wallington but draws pupils from a total of 17 parishes. The proportion of children who are baptised Catholics is approximately 80%. The average weekly curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in both Key Stages 1 and 2. All the issues raised at the previous Section 48 Inspection were addressed and the school has continued to provide outstanding Catholic education.

The school takes pupils from 3 to 11 years of age. The number of pupils currently on roll is 614. The attainment of the pupils on entering the school is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals in the Infants school is 14% and 27% in the Juniors. Those who are pupil premium are 22% of the school population.

Around 17% of pupils receive extra support in class. The majority of pupils (70%) are from ethnic minority backgrounds with 72 different languages being spoken in the school. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is, or is believed to be an additional language is 46.5% of Junior and 48.6% among the Infant pupils. This is above the national average. The school deprivation factor is in the 60th percentile (Raise Online).

Date of previous inspection: 30th June 2011

Overall Grade: 1

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1 Outstanding
Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Requires improvement
Grade 4 Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school in providing Catholic Education

GRADE
1

The Federation of St Elphege's Catholic Schools is outstanding in every aspect of the pupils' education and charitable outreach. It is an ambitious learning community that is a beacon of light to its pupils and staff, families of the Roundshaw Estate, the Sutton Local Authority and within the Archdiocese of Southwark. The school's motto 'With God all things are possible' inspires the entire community to strive for academic excellence while working to support those in need. The Catholic ethos underpins all school policies and the curriculum and is vibrantly celebrated through posters and artwork throughout the school. Ofsted rated both St Elphege's Infants (2013) and Juniors (2015) as outstanding. The report cited excellent teaching and leadership as key strengths. A passion for learning is evident in all Religious Education classes and pupils pray in many different prayer styles. Pupil behaviour is excellent.

Under the Headteacher's excellent leadership and management, the Federation of St Elphege's Catholic School is flourishing. Pupils and staff are positive and realise their full potential. Through the foundation of the Emmaus Teaching School Alliance in 2014, St Elphege's trains teachers and teaching assistants to master skills for their specific roles. This outreach is offered to all schools in the local area with a particular focus on Diocesan Catholic schools.

Governors participate fully in the life of the school and are very well known by the staff, parents and pupils. They are vigilant in their monitoring of school standards and pupil achievement. Minutes of their meetings, visits and governor led activities all attest to the governing body's commitment to safeguarding the Catholic ethos of the school. The school parish links are outstanding. The parish priest is a vital member of the school community as are the Headteacher and four staff members who serve as catechists within the parish's sacramental programme. Together the school and the parish work to support the spiritual development of the St Elphege's pupils and their families.

Parents and carers are very supportive of the school as reported in their overwhelmingly positive response to the Section 48 questionnaire. In parental interviews conducted during the inspection, they offered examples of how the school community had supported their children's learning and development while teaching them to be an active member of the Catholic community.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- Consider incorporating ethnic minority saints into the class patron system
- Present a child friendly version of the school's mission statement to Federation community
- Continue to develop the Religious Education tracking system

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

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The pupils of St Elphege's school live their belief that 'with God all things are possible' through daily expressions of their faith in prayer and action. They actively participate in the Catholic life of the school through assuming responsibilities within their lessons and in the school community. They celebrate the seasons of the Church's liturgical year and learn what is right and wrong. Special consideration is given to the needs of vulnerable families and children through the work of two Family Support Workers and four trained Emotional Literacy Support Assistants. This is an important part of St Elphege's aim to care for the whole child in their community built on Christ's teachings. The school's mission statement is being reviewed in 2016 by a group of pupils, parents, governors, and the Religious Education Coordinator and the Pastoral Deputies.

The pupils of St. Elphege's are reflective and enjoy writing prayers, leading liturgies and being fully involved in the celebration of Mass. Pupils begin their day with prayer during which they are able to think and consider how their contributions impact on the faith community. A parent commented that her children's "involvement in the school choir has further cemented their faith." An after school choir was observed and the joy and engagement of the pupils of every age group was palpable. Very impressively, the pupils sang in several languages and their enthusiasm filled the hall. This outstanding pupil engagement was also observed in the Key Stage 1 Marian assembly where pupils and parents greeted the new day with reflective prayer and joyous singing. All pupils are immersed in Gospel values through prayer and the celebration of the liturgical year. No pupil is withdrawn from worship, liturgy, and Mass or Religious Education lessons.

There are excellent opportunities for pupil participation through the School Council and E-Safety buddies. Pupil leadership is evidenced in their organisation of fundraising efforts for various charities throughout the year. The school's support of John, a young, disabled Ugandan orphan and the foundation and development of a Ghanaian primary school serves to put their faith into action within the international community. The pupils understand that spiritual values are important to many people and that religious worship varies throughout the world.

An appreciation and respect for other cultures begins with the pupils praying in Spanish both at lunchtime and at the end of the day. This strengthens their modern language skills while reminding them that the Catholic Church is universal. Other cultural events such as Black History and World Faiths Weeks provide the pupils with the opportunity to understand other cultures' beliefs and be introduced to new perspectives.

Religious icons are respected as observed in the pupils' veneration of Mary during the month of May. Prayer corners displayed pupils' reflections, prayers and class

prayer books that are rotated between all the families throughout the year. The school prayer is reverently recited at the end of the school day.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

Pupils enjoy their Religious Education classes and actively participate in their learning. Excellent monitoring by the class teacher and the Religious Education Coordinator ensures that all pupils, including the most vulnerable make good progress with many achieving outstanding levels of attainment. In the summer assessments of 2014/15, 59% of the Year 6 pupils gained Level 5 and above. An analysis of Religious Education attainment data over a three-year period reveals that all pupils make outstanding progress and that no gap exists between the most disadvantaged pupils and all others. Significantly, since 2012, those pupils attaining Level 3 at Key Stage 1 has increased year on year while those gaining Level 5 and above at Key Stage 2 has increased by 43%. The pupils of St Elphege's are resilient learners who value their Religious Education. In their classes, they interact well with their peers and adults respecting the opinions and values of others.

Pupils benefit from the moderation of their work within the Federation and at Deanery level ensuring greater accuracy. Excellent examples of pupils' work were examined during the inspection. Pupil writing is outstanding and demonstrates development over both key stages. There is an emphasis on religious vocabulary as viewed in the Key Stage assemblies and in the lessons observed. Key words for religious literacy are displayed and used by pupils. This was particularly effective when coupled with the use of 'driver' words from the school's literacy challenge. Teachers used these words for higher level questioning with effective results. This development of religious vocabulary was also observed at the Collective Worship for both key stages. In all lessons, good questioning and reflection time aids pupils in understanding the connections between topics studied and the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Citing the benefits of this type of study, a parent wrote that "their (the pupils') passion towards Christianity is beyond the belief of their age due to their strong knowledge and participation in Religious Education."

The skilful use of reflective music to signal a meditative pause, in learning to explore more deeply life questions is used effectively throughout the school. Pupils repeatedly expressed their appreciation for this reflection time explaining its benefits such as "I listen to everyone else but then I know what I think and want to do." They are able to discuss and comment on scripture and doctrine and share their own personal faith journeys. The Religious Education Creativity Week is an annual sharing of faith and artistic expression that concludes with a celebration assembly. Their work is displayed throughout the school enhancing St Elphege's faith environment.

World Faith Weeks provide opportunities for pupils to discover the spiritual beliefs of other religions. Citing the positive outcome of this study, one parent comments that "I have seen how children of all religions are welcome and integrated in the

school life...what a fantastic example for our communities.” With a significant percentage of pupils professing other faiths, St Elphege’s is witness to an open, inclusive community founded on Jesus’ teachings. A parent expressed their family’s high satisfaction with their children’s learning and spiritual formation in Religious Education stating: “The school provides exceptional support in my children’s religious upbringing. I see them gaining and appreciating Catholic values and trying to practise them in daily life.” All pupils interviewed spoke positively about their learning experiences in Religious Education.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

Pupils’ response and participation in Collective Worship is outstanding. St Elphege’s ensures that prayer, Collective Worship and Liturgy are the foundation of the school. Pupils and parents pray, reflect and embrace Collective Worship as a means of developing their spiritual life. In the Key Stage 1 Collective Worship observed, pupils, parents and carers respectfully and joyously recited the Rosary and offered prayers for various intentions. After the prayer session, parents spoke of the established tradition of accompanying their children in prayer in the months of October and May. Pupils of all faiths join the school community in songs and prayers of praise. All year groups pray reverently and listen attentively, offering heartfelt responses to God. They are secure in their daily prayer routines of prayerful reflection at the beginning of their lessons, grace before and after meals and at the end of the day. The school’s two choirs motivate pupils to join the ‘singing’ community, which prays and creates a joyful atmosphere at Masses, Collective Worship and at Deanery events.

Teachers train pupils to lead and participate in all types of prayer so they too learn to write prayers, share their faith with others and meditate. In a Key Stage 2 Collective Worship observed, pupils led every aspect of praise and reflection on theme of the Feast of Corpus Christi. Within this outstanding celebration, a variety of prayer styles were employed most impressively, the responses of Mass were woven into the pupils’ participation. Governors and parents regularly pray with the school community and are complimentary of the pupils’ excellent behaviour and leadership of worship.

The pupils of St Elphege’s are nurtured in an atmosphere of prayer and praise that is a celebration of the liturgical year and Pope Francis’ intentions. The interweaving of art and Religious Education as a spiritual learning tool is viewed in the school’s ‘Door of Mercy.’ This outstanding, prayerful display incorporates all of the pupils’ prayers for mercy. It is a key focus within the school’s corridor and pupils from various years were observed stopping, reflecting and sharing their prayers. The school prayer reinforces Gospel values and is a reference point in all curriculum areas.

The pupils of St Elphege’s school joyously praise God daily and participate in Deanery and Diocese celebrations when the opportunity arises. This year, pupils led the singing and served at the St. Elphege’s and Sutton Catholic School Staff Mass for the Year of Mercy. Another example of pupil participation is the Djembe Drum Group that enlivens school worship and provides opportunities for wider participation such as performing in the Royal Albert Hall in London.

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 and managers are outstanding in promoting and evaluating the provision for the Catholic life of the school and in the manner they plan and implement improvements of all pupils in St Elphege's Federation. The Chair of Governors has provided strong, experienced leadership over many years. The governors serve as critical friends of the Headteacher and senior leaders of the school. They demonstrate their commitment to the Church's mission in education by monitoring the school's mission statement and evaluating its impact on the pupils' moral development. The school's Strategic Plan is accurate and sets out clear priorities and targets for Religious Education. Governors participate in the school's Collective Worship and actively assist in other areas such as school outings. Leaders and managers participate in Diocesan training for particular responsibilities. The Deputy Headteacher and Religious Education link governor are part of the Diocesan Relationship and Sex Education Policy Working Party. At St Elphege's, all staff members participate in six training sessions each year on the Catholic Ethos and/or improving the delivery of Religious Education.

Leaders and managers are outstanding in their tracking and evaluation of pupils' progress in Religious Education. Federation meetings and consistent continuing professional development ensure that tracking systems aid all staff to monitor progress and target intervention effectively. The Religious Education Coordinator and the link governor regularly conduct monitoring activities such as classroom visits, lesson observations, learning walks and meetings with class teachers. This informs their analysis of how the actions of the Religious Education Plan have impacted on student progress.

Senior leaders and governors accurately diagnose the strengths of the school and the areas needed for development. Leaders and managers are very good in their tracking and evaluation of the progress of pupils in Religious Education and in ensuring the parity between subjects in time and resources. For example, the extension of the school day directly benefits Religious Education by providing more curriculum time.

The school engages parents through Collective Worship, parents' evenings, newsletters and the class prayer book, which circulates throughout a year group. A parent wrote that "not only does the school nurture my children's religious and moral education but I believe also the parents." Pastoral care within the school is outstanding and this, coupled with high academic expectations for every individual pupil, makes St Elphege's a thriving, inclusive Catholic learning community.

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

Leaders', governors' and managers' monitoring and evaluating of the provision for Religious Education and how they plan and implement for improvements to outcomes for pupils is outstanding. As stated in the school's strategic plan, the foundation for pupils' behaviour and beliefs is the 'development of pupils' faith, joy and spirituality through the love of God.' The Deputy Headteachers along with the Religious Education governor monitor the personal development, behaviour and safeguarding throughout the school.

The Religious Education Action Plan is active and reviewed by the Headteacher and governors. It is ambitious and sets out a programme of planning, assessment and moderation. Observation weeks and regular book scrutiny is scheduled and recorded. Notably, Religious Education observations are rigorous and include the teacher's 'subject knowledge, provision for worship and learning, pupils' work in books and assessment data.' A review of exercise books during the inspection revealed a clear process of monitoring of written work and overall achievement. The Headteacher's termly report to governors includes a review of Religious Education's progress data and new initiatives are discussed with special emphasis on the development of the Catholic Ethos in all schools within the Federation as they consider becoming an academy.

Excellent continuing professional development enables all teachers to maximise all the resources available to them. Training and information from the Education Commission are accessed regularly and all the staff are encouraged to develop further skills.

Targeted training for new staff and NQT's consistently challenges teachers to develop and maintain outstanding Religious Education subject and knowledge and teaching. Phase levelling moderation ensures consistency across the federation. The Religious Education Coordinator and phase leaders moderate pupils' work in the Deanery with other Diocesan schools at the meetings held by the Education Commission.

Working with the Religious Education Coordinator, the link governor strengthens the faith life of the school through classroom visits, the monitoring of the implementation of 'Come and See,' Collective Worship and the prayer life of the school across the Federation. Pupils' views are regularly gathered through conferencing and discussions concerning their books. Responding to the Section 48 questionnaire, a parent wrote: "The school provides, not only a strong educational platform, but also great depth of religious knowledge and education. Also exercising a deep nurture to welcome all religions." Leaders, governors and managers work relentlessly to improve outcomes for pupils through monitoring and innovation.

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

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education is outstanding. Religious Education is a school priority at St Elphege's Federation. Time, training and resources ensure that teachers are updated and challenged to deliver engaging lessons. Lesson observations revealed a range of teaching styles for pupil motivation. Teaching assistants are actively involved with pupils' learning especially those with the greatest educational needs. Lessons were differentiated and pupils were eager to learn and make rapid progress during class time. Four lessons were observed ranging from Early Years to Year 6. All were good with outstanding features or outstanding. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their Religious Education lessons consistently remarking that they most enjoy 'linking' their Catholic faith to how they make choices and assessing their own behaviour. All teaching encourages pupils' enjoyment of and enthusiasm for Religious Education.

Individual support is given to those pupils with the greatest educational needs. Through targeted intervention, they achieve their very best and no gap exists between pupils. Assessment data reveals that in the school year of 2014/15, 41% of Pupil Premium and SEN students achieved Level 5 in Religious Education. This is in keeping with the achievement of other pupils. Diagnostic marking aids pupils to grow in knowledge and understanding and indicates how they can improve their written work. This marking, coupled with termly assessments and discussions with pupils and parents, clarifies success criteria and leads to making rapid progress. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils explained how working in talking pairs helped them to understand what they were learning (the sacrament of Reconciliation) and know how best to complete their written assignment. Excellent use of learning tools which ranged from a game of Reconciliation snakes and ladders to focus pupils on understanding the actions and words of the priest engaged pupils in their learning. In a Reception class, there was excellent development of the gospel theme 'Love one another and you will be my friends' concluding with the pupils writing new rules for the classroom friendship board. In all lessons observed, pupils made excellent progress due to engaging activities and staff expectations. Good examples of pupils' prayers and study reflections are found on the prayer table in each classroom.

Pupils express pride in their achievements in Religious Education and speak confidently about their beliefs and Other World Faiths. The pupils of St Elphege's work independently or in teams to explore religious topics. They are proud of their written work, and projects, which are displayed throughout the school. Achievement and effort are celebrated both in the classroom and at the whole school assembly.

Continual professional development ensures that teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which is consistently applied to challenge and inspire the pupils to do their very best. The Religious Education Coordinator participates in Diocesan

training. In addition, the Federation Coordinators meet regularly. While a high percentage of staff is Catholic all staff work to ensure that there is a consistent, challenging faith filled message in each year group.

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

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning is outstanding. St. Elphege's aims to make all teaching and learning enjoyable, memorable and relevant and to promote each child's God given purpose in life. Through the '*Come and See*' programme coupled with the '*Learning Challenge Curriculum*' the pupils study relevant topics which are well planned and innovative in the learning experiences offered to the pupils. All teaching relates back to Religious Education whose themes underpin study in all other subjects. The curriculum builds up progressively, enabling pupils to consolidate their knowledge and develop their understanding, attitudes, skills and further knowledge of the Catholic faith. The Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishop's Conference.

In all lessons, teaching is built upon pupils' prior attainment and each pupil's progress is tracked and their progress shared with the following year's teacher. The curriculum and all other activities are made relevant to all pupils and are modified when appropriate to meet the needs of individuals and groups of pupils while developing their spiritual, moral and vocational knowledge. Additional cross-curricular links with the PSHE curriculum help embed and extend the pupils' learning. In a Year 3 lesson observed, pupils explored forgiveness as Gospel message but also as a value that aids them to be good citizens. Sex and Relationship Education works to prepare the whole child for a life of love and giving. Pupils of both Key Stages, enthusiastically relate how they enjoy linking their Catholic faith to their daily lives and how this influences their decisions.

St Elphege's school is alive with colourful, thought provoking and prayerful displays. Early Years and Year 1 extension activities centre on the wonder of God's creation that is developed through an imaginative use of the environment. Other years' experience retreats, visits and speakers from Other Faiths. The '*Learning Challenge Curriculum*' promotes deeper understanding and enjoyment of the topics explored while opening the pupils to new perspectives on religious belief. The teaching of Other Faiths is clearly planned and this study aids pupils living in multi-cultural Britain to be open to the beliefs of others. Pupils demonstrate a high level of tolerance and acceptance to those who are different from them. The 'Learning Challenge Questions' used throughout the school encourages pupils to consider a variety of perspectives in regards to the curriculum. Some of this learning encompasses faith perspectives in regard to world peace and other relevant global issues. Religious Education classes foster a culture of respect and understanding for all cultures and faiths while visiting priests, lay ministers and people from Other Faiths whom share with the pupils their daily practice of faith.

Extra-curricular enrichment activities are offered in art, music and drama and further enhance and excite the pupils' learning. Retreats and prayer days provide reflection and community building time for all who attend. At the request of the Area Bishop, St Elphege's pupils wrote prayers for the Anglican Cathedral Door of Mercy. Year 6 visited Westminster Cathedral and Year 4 a Baptist church. The school supports two choirs; a drum band, sports teams and other initiatives all of which are testament to the pupils' love and enjoyment of learning.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding. The Religious Education Coordinator cascades training in meditation, reflection and prayer with children to improve daily reflections within assembly and the classroom. '*Come and See*' themes link classroom study with the school's liturgical celebrations. The liturgical year is marked through prayer services such as Advent reflections, and the Stations of the Cross. During Lent, pupils are encouraged to join in on the journey of Christ. They make individual and class promises. Many parents and carers join the staff and pupils in the remembering of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection, which is marked by stillness, meditation and reverence. Each term, a member of the Sutton Schools' Work (a Christian organisation) leads the assembly.

The celebration of Our Lady Queen of Heaven with the Key Stage 1 pupils unites parents and carers with their children in praying for the needs of their own families and those of Church. A Mass of joy and thanksgiving is offered for those pupils who received their First Holy Communion. Each pupil is invited to record the meaning of the sacrament in a special class book.

Parents spoke of a "prayerful, calm atmosphere" that is created during school worship. One parent wrote: "Whole school prayers and liturgies have encouraged my children to love their faith and helped them see that they are part of a much wider church." Parents, parishioners and friends are invited to celebrate the weekly school Mass. In addition, three times a year the whole school celebrates the Eucharist at St. Elphege's parish Church. Weekly Key Stage liturgies prepare the pupils for the following Sunday's Gospel teaching. In all of these prayerful gatherings, the pupils are involved in writing prayers, choosing hymns, reading and acting in Gospel inspired drama.

St Elphege's is a leader in Collective Worship. The school organises a faith concert for other Catholic Schools. Nine Catholic schools participate in these events providing a wider celebration of the Catholic faith while engaging pupils' parents and carers.