

THE VALIDATION REPORT



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.

NAME OF SCHOOL	Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School
ADDRESS	Fawley Road Southcote Reading RG30 3EP
URN	110107
CHAIR OF GOVERNORS	Marius Hopley
HEADTEACHER	John Casey
NAMES OF VALIDATORS	Rosemary Olivier Celia Axton
DATES OF THE VALIDATION VISIT	24 th -25 th June 2013

Information about the school

Number of students on roll	820
Number of boys	443
Number of girls	377
Number of statemented students	104
Percentage of Catholic students	49
Number of teaching staff	54
Number of support staff	40
Percentage of Catholic staff	33

Blessed Hugh Faringdon is a Catholic secondary Voluntary Aided School in the trusteeship of the Diocese of Portsmouth. It is smaller than average, with a smaller than average sixth form. About half of the students are from minority ethnic groups and one third of these speak English as an additional language. The largest group are of Black African and Eastern European heritage.

The proportion of students eligible for free school meals and for the student premium is in line with national figures.

The proportion of disabled students, or with special educational needs (SEN), is above the national average.

The proportion of students, for whom English is an additional language, is high.

The school provides the Bartimaeus Unit and an Asperger Unit.

The school serves the Pastoral Areas of Central and West Reading; it also takes students from West and South Berkshire and Loddon Valley.

The school's effectiveness in providing Catholic education

This is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. Students are keenly aware of being in a Christian school and they share its values. Staff take pride in the care that they provide for all students, especially those who are disadvantaged.

The headteacher, with the senior leadership team and the governing body, are committed to raising standards and achievement for all students. They have been successful in their actions: the school is now judged by Ofsted to be good.

The headteacher and the staff aspire to provide excellent Catholic secondary education in Reading and have made rapid progress towards that goal.

a) Key strengths of the school

- Outstanding personal Christian leadership of the headteacher.
- Outstanding leadership of the head of religious education (RE).
- Outstanding leadership of the chaplain and the high quality of chaplaincy provision.
- Significant strengths of religious education.
- Significantly improved standards and progress in all subjects, raising aspiration and hope for local Catholic families.
- Greatly improved quality of teaching.
- Strong investment to support students in all aspects of their lives.
- Preferential option for those students, who are in need of care.
- Strength of relationships between staff members, staff and students and students and their peers.
- Respect for individuals and for the environment.
- Commitment of governors to the ethos of the school and to its improvement.
- Strengths in student leadership of the sixth form team and the school council.

b) Key areas for development

- Continue to develop opportunities for students to take leadership roles in prayer and liturgy; an action from the last validation.
- Carry out an urgent audit of the contribution of all subjects to the spiritual development of students; an action remaining from the previous validation.
- Provide regular opportunities for all staff, to develop their understanding of their role in a Catholic school.
- Ensure that governors play a full part in the evaluation of the school as a Catholic community; an action from the last validation.
- Urgently develop a more accurate assessment of the school's position against validation standards.

c) Progress since the last validation

Good progress has been made in most areas for development, especially in the significant improvements in all aspects of religious education, which is now good.
Display related to the Christian life of the school is now outstanding, especially around corridors and in public spaces.
Priests now regularly visit the school to meet students and to lead liturgical celebrations.
Rewards and recognition of achievement and dedication are a key feature of the success of the school.
There are significant areas for development still to be addressed, remaining since the last validation.

d) Summary of parents' views of the school

The majority of parents are supportive of the school in all aspects. Thirty four families returned completed surveys; a small number felt that they were not sufficiently well-informed about the sex and relationships education (SRE) programme. This was not borne out by the validators' findings.

THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION A1: The school community	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths identified by the school

- The school achieved a “Good” rating in the OFSTED of November 2012.
- The school has experienced rising levels of attainment in recent years, with the 5 A*-C figure reaching 91% in 2012 and the 5 A*-C figure including Eng and Maths reaching 57%. We expect this to reach 100% and 70% respectively in 2013.
- The numbers of students with SEN, EAL and from ethnic minorities is higher than the national average. The school has an Aspergers Centre. This diversity is celebrated and it strengthens the school.
- There is a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds in the heritage of our students and this is seen as a real strength of the school. There are very few instances of bullying or racism. Relationships between students of different ethnic backgrounds are excellent.
- As a school our intake is approximately 50% Catholic so we endeavour to make all students aware of our Faith without them feeling excluded. Parental surveys tell us that their children feel safe in school.
- Student Leaders are drawn from the 6th Form and Year 11 – a recent Head boy was from the Aspergers Centre.
- The school also supports the wider community in a number of ways. 6th Formers help in local primary schools but also support our reading challenges in school for those students in Year 7 who do not have a reading age of more than 11 years.

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- Monitor the progress of the issues in the SDP– 2012 onwards

VALIDATORS’ JUDGEMENT

SECTION A1: The school community	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
		✓		

Key strengths

- Gospel values are implicit in the life of the school.
- The school promotes equality and recognises diversity.
- Visitors are welcomed into the school.
- Behaviour is good; the great majority of students show respect to one another and value the school premises.
- Effective induction procedures are in place.
- Support for students with SEN is exceptional.
- Students value the opportunities provided in the extra-curricular provision.
- The school council plays a meaningful role on behalf of the student body.
- Religious education is valued, especially by older students.
- The role of the chaplain in the school, the local Catholic community and the diocesan chaplains’ group, which she co-ordinates and leads.

Areas identified for development

The validators agree with the school’s proposed area for development and in addition suggest the following:

- Provide frequent opportunities for staff to reflect on their role as adults in a Catholic school and to refresh and renew their own faith.
- Provide more opportunities for students to take on leadership responsibilities.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION A2: Leadership and management	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths identified by the school

- The Headteacher understands his role in sustaining and developing the religious life of the school and leads effectively in this respect, ensuring that the Catholic life of the school is underpinned and supported as much as possible. The Headteacher ensures that each year group has a themed assembly for each week, organised through our School Chaplain and supported by the Year Leaders.
- The Governing Body have a good understanding of the school and they understand how the school seeks, effectively, to promote Catholic faith, worship, knowledge and practice. Governors regularly attend masses and liturgies held at the school, the Link RE Governor meets with the Subject Leader for RE to support and understand the RE curriculum. Governors attend an annual “Governors Day” to observe lessons and become aware of the issues facing the school. Governors are very committed to maintaining, with the Headteacher, the Catholic life of the school and this is shown through their contribution to developing the School Development Plan and through support and encouragement for staff and students. Every summer, for example, some Governors attend the whole school “Thanksgiving Mass” and then took part in the fun charitable activities that encompassed the day
- The students’ spiritual and moral development permeates the whole school curriculum. Moral and ethical themes are taught distinctively in RE and in PSHE but further developed in areas such as Science and English.

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- Ensure effectiveness of Link Governor working with RE department-on-going

VALIDATORS’ JUDGEMENT

SECTION A2: Leadership and management	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths

- The headteacher’s personal commitment to raising standards to benefit the Catholic community.
- The headteacher’s commitment to the well-being of all students.
- The headteacher’s commitment to spotting talent and encouraging staff to assume new responsibilities.
- The hard work of governors to support the ethos and development of the school.
- The passion demonstrated by key governors, including the chair, for the school and their commitment to its development and to its success.
- Subject leaders recognise the strengths in the ethos of the school.
- Staff are committed to supporting the school and work purposefully to further its success.
- New staff are given induction into the expectations of working in a Catholic school.
- All members of the community are highly valued.
- The effectiveness of all leaders.

Areas identified for development

The validators agree with the school’s area for development and in addition suggest the following:

- Consider the position and status of RE in comparison with the core subjects.
- Mirror outstanding practice in other schools by encouraging governors to engage fully with the section 48 self-review process of the diocese, by providing training for link governors to report on the evidence of Catholic and Christian life in line with their policies.
- Ensure that all subjects review their department’s contribution to the life of the school.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION A3: The wider community	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths identified by the school

- The school Chaplain is essential for the Catholic life of the school and is a key link with parishes. She has regular contact with Parish priests and arranges, for example, the rota of priests who celebrate our weekly mass.
- The school is part of the cluster of local Reading Catholic schools, mainly primary schools, who meet regularly.
- The school enjoys links with Year 5 and 6 students, who visit the school for activities e.g. transition days, school productions and “KidZone”.
- The Reading Area Youth Ministry Development Leader is based at Blessed Hugh and his role links our students with the parishes and the Catholic primaries schools in the Greater Reading area.
- BHF attends Diocesan Masses and other events and the Headteacher is part of the Diocesan Catholic Secondary Heads group. The school Chaplain coordinates the diocesan chaplains and organises their termly meetings and is in close contact with all the youth team that supports our diocese. She also supports the national work of Chaplains and attends and leads the national conference. As a member of the ACCE’s leadership team, she also contributes to the organisation of their annual conference which she attends.
- The school also has been awarded “International School” status and associate status for being a “Rights Respecting School” and our 6th formers visit Lourdes as helpers and have attended the World Youth Day.

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- Organize a staff retreat-scheduled for Summer 2013
- Continue to develop links with feeder primary schools

VALIDATORS’ JUDGEMENT

SECTION A3: The wider community	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
		✓		

Key strengths

- Contact with parents and with local parishes is improved by the newsletters and use of information and communication technology (ICT).
- The school engages with diocesan initiatives and is supportive of the diocese, for example, in the role played by the chaplain as chair of the diocesan chaplains’ group.
- There are active partnerships with other local schools.
- The school is effective in preparing students for their roles and responsibilities towards all members of society.
- The school helps to prepare its students for global citizenship, through national and international links and charitable activities and fund-raising, further supported by its status as an International School.
- Diversity is recognised.
- All staff value the distinctive nature of the school and support its ethos; they care actively about the students.

Areas identified for development

- The validators agree with the school’s identified areas for development and in addition recommend that the school should:
- Increase its presence in local parishes, using senior leadership team (SLT) and senior students.
 - Improve relationships and contact with partner Catholic primary schools, including seeking the view of the schools in what could help them.

CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION B1: Leadership and co-ordination of religious education	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths identified by the school

- The excellent Head of RE is a great role model for the children and leads the department effectively. She was appointed in Sept 2007 and she has had a significant impact on the improved standards of attainment in the department over the last four years. Results at GCSE have improved substantially and in 2012 67% of students achieved a Grade C or more, an improvement of 9% on the year before and 17% over the last two years, indicating a rising trend of achievement in the Department in line with national standards. All students follow the full RE course at GCSE, but we allow some of our less able students to complete the entry level certificate and the “Equality and Diversity” course.
- The Department is well resourced financially, has access to four distinct teaching rooms, including two IWB and is ably supported by our Chaplain.
- The A Level in Philosophy and Ethics has a pass rate of 100% in 2011 and 2012.
- A new 2nd in RE was appointed for September 2012 to support the Head of RE. Her main immediate task is to review provision at KS3. Each student at Key Stage 3 has a student descriptor level sheet at the back of their book allowing them to be in control of their learning and to set themselves clear targets which is then reviewed at the end of each assessment.
- Induction arrangements organised though an AHT ensure that new staff are effectively inducted into our school.

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- Continue the support for the RE Department to maintain the current effectiveness.
- New 2nd in RE to lead on review of current provision at Key Stage 3.

VALIDATORS' JUDGEMENT

SECTION B1: Leadership and co-ordination of religious education	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths

- Leadership and co-ordination of the RE department are outstanding.
- The profile of religious education in the school has been raised since the last validation.
- The head of RE has outstanding leadership skills and has worked exceptionally hard to raise standards and develop the teaching and learning within the department. She has a clear vision for the direction the department is taking and has created a team of teachers, who share her goals of raising attainment and raising students' enjoyment of RE and who live out the Gospel values in their teaching.
- Challenging targets are set for students based on Fisher Family Trust D data and standards are monitored and tracked rigorously, with appropriate intervention being put in place for students, who are not making expected progress.
- The curriculum adheres to the Catholic Directory for Religious Education.
- General RE in the sixth form is valued by the students.

Areas identified for development

The validators agree with the areas for development identified by the school and in addition recommend that:

- The link governor should work closely with the leadership team
- The head of RE should raise the profile of the subject further as a core department in the school.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION B2: Attainment and progress in religious education	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths identified by the school

- The RE curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 satisfies the expectations of the Bishops and Diocesan Guidelines
- Results at GCSE have improved substantially and in 2012 67% of students achieved a Grade C or more
- Students' progress is now effectively measured and tracked. The students are now able to articulate firstly their achievements, and, through the self-evaluation sheets, secondly what is needed to improve. In line with the national standards we ensure that all students undertake a levelled assessment which tests them for both types of Attainment Targets (AT1 – Learning from Religion and AT2 – Learning about Religion) every term.
- Implementation of Year 10 and 11 PiXL monitoring programme.
- Production of "Covey" compelling scoreboard to aid achievement.
- Implementing the new Diocesan KS3 programme of study.
- Specific "skills" workshops are in place in the run up to the mock exams, and will continue afterwards.
- Focusing on "D1" and "C3" students to raise attainment.
- The revision booklet has been reviewed again and subsequently improved upon to include revision for exams.
- Rotating exam display boards ready before each exam, including content and top tips
- Ensure that the more able can fully participate and receive challenge in lessons.

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- Achieve GCSE passes of 70% Grade C or above at least in 2013.
- Continue to implement the new Diocesan KS3 scheme.

VALIDATORS' JUDGEMENT

SECTION B2: Attainment and progress in religious education	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
		✓		

Key strengths

- Attainment and progress in RE have improved considerably since the last validation.
- Students acquire knowledge, develop understanding and skills and are able to evaluate well.
- They are keen to do well and most apply themselves diligently in lessons.
- They seek to produce their best work and are interested in their learning.
- Students' attainment is good and is improving. Progress in KS3 is outstanding and the much improved GCSE results are now close to the national average, despite students' prior attainment being below average.
- Predictions for the current cohort, which are supported by marks from external exams completed in 2012, indicate that attainment will soon be outstanding and on a par with the English results.
- KS5 attainment is good and although the uptake of Philosophy and Ethics A level is small at present, signs are hopeful that numbers will increase as the sixth form develops.

Areas identified for development

- To raise the level of attainment for higher achieving students, so that the percentage of A-A* grades is in line with national averages, as a sharper focus for the school's area for development.
- Validators agree with and welcome the other area for development identified by the school, namely implementing the KS3 programme.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION B3: Quality of teaching	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
			✓	

Key strengths identified by the school

- The lesson observation programme undertaken by the SLT and the Departments own self-evaluation indicates that the quality of teaching is good to outstanding and relationships between teachers and students and student to student is good.
- The department has a rigorous tracking and monitoring spreadsheet that cover all of KS3 and GCSE students which has been in place for some time we are able to use these to pinpoint all students' strengths and weaknesses.

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- Improve GCSE results again – to be at least in line with GCSE English.

VALIDATORS' JUDGEMENT

SECTION B3: Quality of teaching	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
			✓	

Key strengths

- The quality of teaching in the RE department is good and sometimes outstanding. It has improved considerably since the last validation.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge, which enthuses and challenges students.
- Lessons are well planned and on the whole students are engaged in lessons and make good progress.
- Students are aware of their level of attainment and know what they need to do to improve.
- Feedback to students, both written and oral, is useful and helps students to make progress.
- There is consistency within the department for tracking and monitoring student progress.
- Most students are able to work independently and some take responsibility for their own learning. Assessment for learning is effective and consistent across the department. Teachers use a wide range of well-produced resources, including the use of ICT to engage students in their learning.
- The classrooms in the RE department are well-presented and informative learning environments.

Areas identified for development

- The validators agree with the area for development identified by the school and in addition recommend that:
- The department build in more opportunities for students to become independent learners in lessons.

SPIRITUAL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION C1: Spiritual development	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths identified by the school

- Prayers are said during tutor time and staff are given a Prayer Book to assist them with the daily prayers, common prayers are listed in the student planner and a weekly topical prayer sheet is produced by the Chaplain.
- All Year Groups have a weekly assembly based on a theme related to the Sunday readings
- We are fortunate in having our own chapel where we have the privilege of reserving the Blessed Sacrament. It is used regularly for celebrations of Mass and staff liturgies and is available for students at break and lunch times for prayer and meditation. We run a retreat programme for Key Stage 3 students.
- Year 7 tutor groups have a Welcome Mass at the start of the academic year. All other year groups take part in a welcome liturgy, led by our Chaplain.
- There is also an Advent Carol Service, led by Year 7 students and during Lent Catholic students have the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The chaplain also invites in each year 7 RE group to our sacred space and allows them to become familiar with the chapel, they then return to reinforce their learning about the Sacrament of the Eucharist. There is a Thanksgiving Mass every summer to celebrate the achievements of our school community and in particular, our students from Year 11 and Year 13 who are leaving.
- In the autumn we celebrate Blessed Hugh Faringdon Day, with a whole school Mass. It is a wonderful and joyful occasion, animated with drama and dance by students of all ages.

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- Increase the number of parish priests visiting and supporting the school
- Hold a staff retreat-scheduled for summer 2013 at Kintbury
- Ensure Year Leaders are trained for delivering Assemblies and acts of worship

VALIDATORS' JUDGEMENT

SECTION C1: Spiritual development	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
		✓		

Key strengths

- The expertise and commitment of the chaplain and the chaplaincy provision.
- The availability and ambiance of the school chapel.
- The programme of weekly Masses, supported by tutor groups.
- Opportunities for prayer and liturgy linked to the liturgical year, Reconciliation in Advent and Lent.
- The retreat programme for year 7 students.
- The prayer and assembly programme.
- Religious display around the school.

Areas identified for development

The validators agree with the areas chosen by the school and in addition recommend the following:

- Further develop opportunities for students to take leadership roles in prayer and worship.
- Develop a programme of retreats and away-days for students in key stages 4 and 5.
- Develop regular self-review for all subjects in their role in the spiritual development of students.
- Consider increasing the time available for chaplaincy.
- Consider establishing a team of staff, students and clergy to support chaplaincy.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SAYS

SECTION C2: Moral development	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	✓			

Key strengths identified by the school

- There is a strong pastoral, support and guidance system in place and this links well in supporting the Catholic mission of the school. We offer a free breakfast so that the children can start the day ready to learn.
- The school has a behaviour and rewards system policy that promotes effective learning in the classroom and the use of “Vivomiles” promotes a good attitude to learning and charitable donations. Students are rewarded for one of three things a) attitude to learning b) community service and c) attendance and punctuality.
- Student achievements are celebrated regularly in assembly.
- Reconciliation Days are held in Lent and liturgies held during the course of the Liturgical Year at the appropriate time.
- Students are happy with the school and surveys acknowledge this. Students have a voice though the School Council and the Head Boy and Girl and Deputies meet with the Headteacher every week.
- Students also feel safe in the school and that bullying is taken seriously and acted upon swiftly by the pastoral team when an issue occurs.

Areas identified for development by the school *(include timescale for action)*

- Maintain the programme of surveys of students to understand any student concerns

VALIDATORS' JUDGEMENT

SECTION C2: Moral development	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
		✓		

Key strengths

- The personal, social and health education (PSHE) and SRE programmes both prepare students effectively for adult life.
- Students have a strong sense of common values.
- Students behave considerately towards one another.
- The school council and sixth form leaders are effective and impressive role models.
- Rewards reinforce a culture of high expectations and positive encouragement within school; achievements are widely publicised and valued.
- Students' good moral development is actively supported through the RE and PSHE curricula.
- Staff provide excellent role models in their behaviour and attitudes.
- Extra-curricular activities have a well-supported take-up.
- The Breakfast Club is a resource provided by the school.

Areas identified for development

- The validators agree with the schools' area for development and also recommend that the school should consider ways in which students from other faith backgrounds could be supported in their faith journey.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR THE VALIDATION

As part of the validation process:

Two validators spent a preliminary half-day in the school, meeting with the headteacher and the head of the RE department, discussing the school's self-review report, touring the site of the school and meeting a range of staff and students.

The validation took place over two school days, when interviews and discussions were held with:

- The headteacher;
- Members of the senior leadership team;
- The head of the RE department;
- The chair of the governing body and the link governors for RE;
- The chaplain;
- Managers of the special units;
- Members of the teaching and support staff;
- The student council and sixth form leadership team.

A staff briefing session was observed.

Six religious education lessons were observed.

Four acts of collective worship were observed.

An analysis was made of responses to the parental questionnaire.

A range of documentation from the school was scrutinised, including:

- Section 48 self-review form,
- Staff handbook,
- RE departmental handbook,
- School prospectus,
- Section 5 inspection report,
- Ofsted self-evaluation form (SEF),
- School development plan,
- Staff and student questionnaires,
- Examination data.

Informal feedback was given to the senior leadership team, chair of governors and to the head of the RE department at the end of the process.

Conclusion

The validators would like to thank the headteacher, staff, governors, parents and students of Blessed Hugh Faringdon School for their welcome and hospitality and their open and honest contribution to discussions.