

DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH VALIDATION REPORT



St Swithun's Catholic Primary School, Southsea

Taswell Road, Southsea, Hants PO5 2RG

Date of previous validation June 2009
Date of this validation **3 December 2014**

Overall effectiveness	Previous validation:	Outstanding
	This validation:	Requires Improvement

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

This is a school that requires improvement

Key strengths:

- The school's mission 'to love one another as I have loved you' has a significant impact on the daily life of the school community.
- Visitors to the school are warmly welcomed.
- The leadership, dedication and role model of the executive headteacher is a key strength of the school.
- The school leadership, including governors, are fully committed in their drive for continuing improvement.
- Staff share a willingness to journey together to provide an ethos and curriculum that is the best for all children.
- St Swithun's is a school that is caring and supportive and where every child matters.
- The passion, knowledge and commitment of the assistant headteacher, who is also RE leader, are key strengths of the school.
- Spiritual and moral development are good.
- Parents' views of the school are generally positive, as was recognised by the responses of parents to the questionnaire.
- The quality of key stage and class worships observed during the validation allowed children to sing, pray and reflect with reverence on the message of the Gospel.
- The children in the school exhibit very good behaviour and Christian attitudes.
- Staff and children act as witnesses to their faith, through their support of one another and their support for local, national and international charities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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

- Review the school's mission statement with the whole community.
- Ensure that the process of delivering high quality religious education (RE) is supported by consistent planning, linked to the national levels of attainment.
- Plan differentiated activities that allow children to be challenged in their demonstration of knowledge and understanding in RE.
- Use marking and assessment to promote further learning.

Full Report

The school as a Catholic community

The school community:	Good
The wider community:	Good

- St Swithun's is a school that has a strong sense of community and seeks to involve and support all members. A review of the current mission statement, that can be shared and understood by all members of the community, will help to further strengthen its Catholic ethos.
- The leadership, dedication and role model of the executive headteacher are key strengths of the school. The impact of her leadership, her personal witness to the faith and her unwavering commitment to a shared vision and mission are already having a positive impact on the school's drive for improvement.
- The revised early years' induction programme and termly workshops for all year groups have ensured that parents feel welcome in school and are more involved in their children's education.
- Induction arrangements ensure that new staff are clear on the expectations of teaching in a Catholic school and have a planned programme to develop their confidence in delivering RE and in participating in the prayer life of the school.
- The school has always had a very strong, mutually supportive partnership with the parish. This relationship must be continued and developed with the new parish priest to avoid a negative impact on the life of the school and community.
- The executive headteacher plays a key role in the development and support of Catholic education in the diocese. She has been a key driver in the joint governors' working group and the Portsmouth Catholic Schools' Partnership, ensuring stronger working relationships in the pastoral area.
- The pupils are very aware of needs outside of their own and support many local and national causes during their charity week.
- The school has been twinned with a school in Bamenda.

Curriculum religious education

Attainment and progress:	Requires Improvement
Quality of teaching:	Requires Improvement
Leadership and management of RE:	Requires Improvement

- The passion, knowledge and commitment of the assistant headteacher are key drivers in supporting all staff to become more confident in teaching RE. She and the executive headteacher have a clear understanding and strategy for the way forward and her work is already impacting on classroom practice.
- The eight new teachers to the school and existing staff are fully committed to developing their subject knowledge. They are working very hard to plan and deliver lessons, with clear learning objectives, that are RE focussed and ensure continued progression for all pupils, but this is not yet consistent throughout the school and needs to be addressed.
- Formative marking and assessment are beginning to be more RE focussed but children are not always aware of their next steps. This needs to be fully embedded throughout the school.
- Pupils' behaviour is good during lessons and they are keen to learn more.
- Pupils are often able to demonstrate good subject knowledge but need to be given more opportunities to articulate their understanding.

- There is some diversity in the quality of teaching throughout the school. In the best lessons teachers' plans took account of level descriptors, teachers had good subject knowledge, used key questions effectively and planned activities that would enable children to demonstrate their RE knowledge and understanding. There is still a need to challenge more able pupils.
- The quality of the evidence in books varies in terms of presentation, marking, differentiation and activities that deliver the planned RE outcomes. There is a need for greater consistency.
- RE displays are interactive and reflect the current topic.
- Staff have developed homework opportunities to engage families in the RE units.

Spiritual and moral development

Spiritual development:	Good
Moral development:	Good

- The school provides a range of worship opportunities which allow individual and collective members of the school community to express their relationship with one another and with God. The school embraces opportunities to nurture spirituality and give Christian witness; these include:
 - Class worships, liturgies in church, penitential services and staff meeting prayers.
 - The use of good quality prayer tables and the prayer tree.
 - Welcoming parents and the community to attend liturgies.
 - The weekly sending home of a prayer bear with reception pupils and of the figures of Mary and Joseph during Advent, which encourage families to pray and reflect together.
 - The great work of the parish Sister in supporting teachers in leading meditation with the children.
- Pupils behave very well and have good attitudes to their work and their peers.
- Staff act as good role models and reinforce Gospel values to encourage positive behaviour and achievement.
- Pupils develop a sense of responsibility through the various roles they undertake in the school such as school buddies, house captains, green and Fairtrade team members and school councillors.
- The message of stewardship is reflected in the school's work for local, national and international charities.
- Pupils say that St Swithun's is a school where, 'everyone welcomes you, we say prayers together and everyone is seen as special in their own way.'

Leadership and management:	Good
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- The executive headteacher and senior leadership team provide strong Christian witness and are good role models for others.
- Leadership in the school, including the governing body, has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The capacity of the school has been enhanced by the appointment of additional leaders. All in positions of leadership are fully committed to moving the school forward.
- Governors have developed a more strategic role and now provide more effective support and challenge.
- Some progress has been made on the issues identified for improvement in the last validation. The major changes in staffing over the past year highlight the need to refocus on strengthening the community, improving teaching and learning and embedding assessment processes.

School details

Name of school	St Swithun's Catholic Primary School
URN:	116386
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll:	315
Chair of Governors:	Jennifer Collighan
Executive Headteacher:	Catherine Hobbs
School Leader:	Liz Bradbury

St Swithun's Catholic Primary School is a larger than average school situated in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes and St Swithun and within the Portsmouth pastoral area. A large majority (75%) of its pupils are Catholic; 28% of pupils have English as an additional language and come from a variety of ethnic minorities. The proportion of children with special needs is higher than in most other schools. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. The executive headteacher took up her post in January 2014. The assistant headteacher has been in post since September 2014 and both share their time with another Catholic school.

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

Helena Pickering	Lead validator
Robert Dare	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 a key stage and class worships.
- Observations of teaching and learning in RE, including joint observations with the executive headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- Pupil work scrutiny.
- Feedback of key findings to the senior leadership team and a representative of the governing body.

Conclusion

The validators would like to thank the executive headteacher, school leader, assistant headteacher, staff, governors, parents and pupils of St Swithun'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.