



DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on
behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

URN 141482

St Philomena's Catholic Primary School

Chelsfield Road

Orpington

Kent

BR5 4DR

Inspection date: 1st December 2022

Chair of Governors: Mrs M Fairhall

Headteacher: Miss Veronica Maher

Inspectors: Mr Stephen Beck

Mrs Shirley Hulme

EDUCATION COMMISSION

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR
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Interim Director of Education: Angela Cox OBE



Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Philomena's Catholic Primary School is a single, stand-alone Academy that sits within the Bromley Catholic Schools Umbrella Trust. It is situated in the Bromley Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. The principal parish that the school serves is Our Lady of the Crays. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 57% which has reduced significantly since the last inspection. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10% in all Key Stages.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 205. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is below average. 16% of pupils receive Pupil Premium funding which is below the national average. 17% of pupils have special educational needs, including 4 with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). 86% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, principally Black African or Other White backgrounds. 21% of pupils do not have English as a first language.

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SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Philomena's is a good Catholic school because:

It has maintained the many outstanding features identified during the last inspection and continues building on them. It is a welcoming and nurturing school that fully lives out its aim to *'Share the love of God every day, in everything we learn, do or say.'* Pupils experience the Catholic life of the school from their first day. It has a strong sense of community and family ethos. Pupils are confident, articulate and proud of their school and are given many opportunities to take on leadership roles within a range of responsibilities and groups that have been established.

Teaching is good with some outstanding elements, with classroom management being of a high order. The pupils' behaviour for learning and around the school is exemplary.

The Headteacher, two deputy headteachers and the religious education leader as a leadership team, provide focused leadership that has transformed religious education and should now be further embedded across the school.

Prayer is central to the life of the school, and there is a good programme of collective worship in place.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- School leaders should review the newly established system for religious education assessment to identify how this can be made more effective in enabling class teachers to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities.
- Support teachers in using religious education assessment data to provide opportunities for pupils to work with greater independence to ensure they reach their full potential.
- Build on the progress in developing the range of collective worship through training established pupil groups to take the initiative in planning and leading all forms of collective worship.



Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

2

Catholic Life

2

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

1

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

2

Religious Education

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

1

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

2

Collective Worship

2

How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

2

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CATHOLIC LIFE

2

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

The extent to which pupils benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. They know and understand the school's mission statement and strive to achieve it in all areas of their school life. Pupils appreciate this Catholic community and have a certain sense of their worth and the worth of others.

Pupils at St Philomena's are nurtured within a robust Catholic ethos; pupils can express their views and beliefs and can refer to the teaching of Jesus, as witnessed in pupil interviews. They live out their stated aim to *'share the love of God every day, in everything we learn, do and say'*. Catholic principles and values underpin behaviour and relationships, resulting in a strong shared vision for the Catholic life of the school: this encourages the exemplary conduct witnessed and generally focused learning where pupils feel valued and are capable of forgiveness. Pupils are aware of the needs of others and seek justice for all within and beyond the school community. The school is a very generous community, supporting many different charities.

Pupils are happy, confident and enjoy school life, which is reflected in attendance figures that are well above the national average. The pupils' involvement and contributions are evident in all aspects of school life. Pupil voice is instrumental in key decision-making, and pupils feel their views are heard and valued. This is evident through the exceptional work of the religious education ambassadors, with pupils in these roles working alongside the religious education leader to ensure the school's Catholic identity is at the heart of everything they do. Their role as ambassadors in leading prayer has resulted in the observation of special devotions, for example, praying the Rosary in October, which is celebrated by every class in the school. Other initiatives led by these pupils have included Harvest assembly, leading the Stations of the Cross, fundraising for CAFOD, and informing the wider school community about initiatives in the school newsletter.

Pupils' understanding of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is developing into a strength of the school, with each class being given the opportunity to focus on a particular principle of CST throughout the year. There is also a well-established Mini-Vinnies group that effectively promotes many principles of CST (e.g. creating Christmas cards to be sent to those in prison). A CAFOD club was introduced last year, and pupils participate in promoting awareness of and leading fundraising for global issues. They were enthused about Advent and making St Therese sacrifice beads to be sold with the proceeds to serve those in need worldwide. The Eco warriors group has also successfully raised awareness of national and global issues.

The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is good

The quality of relationships is a real feature of the school community. Both pupils and staff evidence a sense of pleasure in being part of a community imbued with the gospel values of respect and love of one's neighbour, clearly evident in the behaviour and good manners of the pupils. Thus, pupils benefit from a secure, calm and purposeful learning environment.

The mission statement of the school is central to everything they do. It is displayed for all to see next to the school entrance to state its importance. Pupils are confident in demonstrating their understanding of how they should treat others and show respect to all.

Pastoral care is exemplary, with several support systems in place, including Youth Mental Health, First Aiders Emotional Literacy Support (ELSA) and a Family Support Worker. Pupils have 'Think Pads' where they can write about their feelings and share them discretely with their teacher.

The school uses every opportunity to demonstrate they are an inclusive community through events such as a recent multicultural evening at which every nationality in the school was represented with culture, music, dancing, food and fun.

Parental questionnaires returned were highly favourable regarding the Catholic nature of the school. As one parent wrote, *'The school is developing the whole child with great care and consideration for the need for 'Catholic social teaching' within the curriculum'*.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is good

Leaders at all levels recognise that everyone has a unique value that must be nurtured and developed and are committed to ensuring that Christian values underpin all that takes place in the school. They have provided a clear educational direction for religious education through appropriate aims, objectives, targets and policies. Governors are proactive and frequent visitors to school and are very supportive of all community events. Leaders have a clear vision of Catholic education, which is communicated to teachers, pupils and parents. Leaders ensure best practice across the school and further the pupils' participation in various liturgies. The senior leadership team ensure that the focused school improvement plan is reviewed regularly by staff and governors.

Parental engagement is a strong supportive feature of the school community; leaders have worked hard to sustain partnership working. There are good links between the school and the Church.

Governors are ambitious for the Catholic life of the school, acknowledging this as a high priority. They are actively involved joining the school community for special events and day-to-day occasions. They delight in the pupils 'creating the Catholic life of the school as agents of change'.



The governors balance the supportive and challenging role conferred upon them, driving forward for improvements as key leadership team partners.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding

Pupils take an active part in lessons and are highly motivated and engaged in their learning. They can talk about their knowledge and how it impacts their lives. This is shown within lessons and monitoring. Religious education is at the heart of the school curriculum, and pupils' learning is increasingly linked with many subjects, such as music, art and English. Teachers model age-appropriate, religious language, and pupils are encouraged to use the correct language in their discussions and written work. School leaders should now review the newly established system for religious education assessment to identify how this can be more effective in enabling class teachers to meet the needs of all abilities. Teachers should use religious education assessment data to provide better opportunities for pupils to work with greater independence to ensure they reach their full potential. The monitoring systems would then support the drive to constantly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Pupils speak highly of religious education and their learning. They are aware of their religion and the religion of others in society. They visit places of worship such as a Synagogue, a Gurdwara and a Mosque and welcome visitors from other faiths to religious education lessons during the school's 'Other Faiths Week'. The school has also organised workshops and assemblies on Hinduism delivered by a Hindu priest. Parents were supportive and complimentary regarding these experiences for their children.

The teaching of relationships, sex and health education (RSE) is in line with diocesan guidance. During pupils' time at St Philomena's, their knowledge in spirituality and theology develops. In reception, the foundations of the Catholic faith are laid. Reception pupils know that God made the world and that God has asked us to care for the world and think of ways in which they can help to take care of it. As they progress into Key Stage 1, they continue this work by exploring their responsibility to look after God's world and look at key theological issues. In lower Key Stage 2, pupils are taught Sacred Scripture and moral issues. They know what the Sacrament of Reconciliation means, understand what it means to make wrong choices and reflect on how bad decisions affect others and us.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good

Formative assessment effectively identifies progress and concepts that require additional consolidation. This is achieved through targeted questioning and checking for understanding. Assessment of religious education has seen a growing improvement in progress throughout the school.

Assessment pieces are identified at the beginning of the unit of work, and the required standards are identified. The Age-Related Standards in religious education are used to assist/support in planning and assessment. The class teacher tracks individual pupils every half term, and the subject leader reviews these professional judgements and discusses them with the class teachers. It would be beneficial now to establish some quality assurance of these judgements. Marking in religious education is more formative and



developmental; it challenges pupils and helps them to move on in their learning. Pupils receive 'next steps' in their books to deepen their understanding. Pupils are becoming more confident in responding to their 'next steps'. Progress is evident in pupils' books, through discussions with pupils, teacher's planning and data tracking.

Parents are active partners in their children's education. Through newsletters, they receive information and guidance on how to support learning and are aware of the topics being covered in class with documents posted on the school website. Parents receive information regularly on their children's progress through consultation evenings and reports.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is good

Religious education is taught using The Way, The Truth and The Life series. It is informed by the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. The school aims to ensure that the programme of study is enriched with various activities, including history, geography and art and these developments should be further fostered. Ten per cent of curriculum time is allocated to teaching religious education as required. The highly motivated subject leader has transformed religious education within the school and is working to consolidate this to secure consistently high-quality teaching and is well supported in this by the school leadership team.

The religious education link governor makes valued contributions to leading and managing the school's religious life. There are strong links with the parish priest. His input and support are highly valued by school staff and parents, who feel his input has a significantly positive impact on the life of the school. He is a regular visitor to the school to celebrate school masses, prepare pupils for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and gives quality time to support all in developing their faith through the valued chaplaincy role he plays. Governors are supportive and challenging and are kept well informed of the religious education curriculum and the Catholic life of the school through the headteacher's report, governor visits to the school, the religious education self-evaluation document and updates at governing body meetings. Regular staff training is delivered by the diocese and the leadership team to ensure the needs of all staff are met.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding

Collective worship is central to the life of the school, and praying together is part of the daily experience for pupils and staff. Over the last three years, the role of pupils in devising and sharing acts of collective worship has been transformed. Pupils said they enjoy helping to plan for collective worship and act with reverence in these celebrations. They sing and respond to prayers with confidence. Classes in each phase take it, in turn, to plan and deliver a liturgy to their peers every Friday afternoon. This includes presenting their interpretation of the Bible/Gospel reading through drama, singing or narration. Liturgies are structured around the principles of gathering, listening, reflecting, responding and mission.

In a school survey, pupils said they enjoy praying with their class and the whole school. A half-termly rota has been established for each class to attend morning Mass with the congregation at Our Lady of the Crays. They are often given roles within the parish Mass of reading and bringing the offertory gifts to the altar. Pupils have always taken on roles in the celebration of school Masses. They are involved in the planning stage and throughout the service. Pupils' participation in phase groups and whole school assemblies with the headteacher or religious education leader is developing well. They are engaged, respectful and volunteer confident responses to questions. Pupils use a variety of approaches to prayer, formal and informal, private and communal, and they are encouraged to be still and to listen to God. The use of drama, sacred music, and art enhances prayer. The parish priest's engagement with the collective worship life of the school has engendered in pupils a love, understanding and enthusiasm for liturgical celebrations. The school has a choir and orchestra, with the quality of pupils' singing being a strength, greatly enhancing collective worship.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good

St Philomena's provides several opportunities for pupils to pray throughout the school day, including morning and end-of-day prayers, grace at lunchtime and traditional prayers of the Church, with every class having a prayer focus that reflects the liturgical year and private intentions with the prayer box.

Pupils are taught about liturgical seasons, how these are celebrated and their importance. Every classroom has a focal area reflecting the current liturgical season and their current unit of learning in religious education.

Masses and liturgical celebrations are held in school, and parents and parishioners are made to feel very welcome. Creative use of the resources by Ten-Ten ensures that the approach to whole school and class collective worship is closely linked to the liturgical seasons. The significant attendance of parents at school celebrations is a key indicator of the support they provide for their pupils' spiritual development.



Resources, including artefacts and focal points for prayer, are utilised well. Pupils explained that *“the lighted candle represented the light of Christ in their midst”*.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good

Acts of collective worship are led well by adults. They make them accessible to pupils in a contemporary context, relating them to the mission of the school. Leaders have a thorough understanding of the Church’s liturgical year. They act as role models for the school community.

The school self-evaluation and improvement plan reflect the Catholic nature of the school. Concrete links are made between scripture and the everyday experience of pupils to develop their understanding of the teachings of Jesus. The religious education leader evaluates the phase group and child-led liturgies and provides feedback to staff and pupils.

Presentations in governor meetings ensure that governors are updated with how collective worship (and the broader religious education curriculum) is delivered across the school. The religious education leader reports to the whole governing body every term in the headteacher’s report. This report consists of three sections, Catholic life, collective worship and religious education curriculum, to ensure governors have a comprehensive overview.

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