



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

ST ETHELBERT'S VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wexham Road, Slough, SL2 5QR

DfE School No: 871/3363

URN: 11039

Acting Head Teacher: Mrs M Dickinson
Chair, Interim Executive Board: Mr I Cafolla

Reporting Inspector: Mr J Flanagan
Associate Inspector: Mrs M Everington

Date of Inspection: 26 June 2013

Date Report Issued: 19 July 2013

Date of previous Inspection: October 2010

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and
in partnership with Slough Local Authority

Information about the school

St Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School in Slough is a larger than average primary school. There are 455 pupils on roll, of whom over 68% are baptised Catholics. The school serves the two parishes of The Holy Redeemer and St Ethelbert. The proportion of children from ethnic minority backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is above average. There are 19 full time and five part time teachers of whom 38% are Catholic. An interim head teacher is currently in post and a permanent head teacher has been appointed for September 2013. At present, the governing body has been replaced by an interim executive board (IEB).

Key grades for inspection

1. Outstanding 2. Good 3. Satisfactory 4. Inadequate

Overall Effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 3

St Ethelbert's is a satisfactory Catholic school. It provides well for the prayer and spiritual life of the pupils and worship opportunities are good. More focussed work is now being planned to improve the quality of RE for the pupils and the IEB is working well to support and guide the school. Relationships between staff and children and parents are good in the school. The school's chaplaincy team is well established and organises much of the worship and sacramental work of the school. There are clear links with the parishes. The teaching of RE is of a satisfactory standard. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their time at the school and attainment is also satisfactory. Pupils are happy at St Ethelbert's but only some are able to describe their participation in the life of the school.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 3

All the areas for action highlighted in the last Section 48 report in 2010 have been given some attention. However, not all the work has been completed. The mission statement has been reviewed and a new one has been adopted. It is displayed throughout the school but it is not known and understood by all the pupils and there is scope for it to be embedded further in the life of the school. Work to support staff in their teaching of RE and the monitoring of the teaching has been undertaken but remains an area for development.

The school's self-evaluation document (SEF-RE) is well written and clear but some of the judgements lack evidence to support them. There is a shared understanding among school leaders of what actions need to be undertaken to help the school to improve, coupled with a commitment to ensure that improvement takes place.

All school leaders are committed to the Catholic life and mission of the school. The interim headteacher is giving the school good leadership and in this she is supported by the deputy head who is also the RE co-ordinator. The members of the IEB work hard to challenge and support the members of the school's senior leadership team. A new headteacher has been appointed and will take up her post in September. She is already working with staff to ensure that improvements in the school continue.

The leader and managers of the school have the capacity to ensure that satisfactory, or better, effectiveness is maintained.

What the school should do to improve further

- continue to embed the mission statement in all aspects of the life of the school and to ensure that all members of the school fully understand its meaning
- maintain efforts to raise the standards of teaching and learning in RE
- introduce and use the “I can” statements in the assessment of children’s work.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 3

The children are able to talk about aspects of the Catholic life of the school but few are able to explain the meaning of the mission statement and some cannot remember it at all. They are able to talk about religious activities and they recognise the value of these activities to themselves and others. They are keen to raise money to help others and can describe some of the things they have done although not in detail. The children enjoy being given responsibility such as being prefects and carry out such tasks seriously. Throughout the school the children show respect to their peers and to other members of the school community.

In assemblies, the children listen and respond. During times of prayer and reflection, they are reverent. They are able to describe the different types of worship that are arranged for them and they express enthusiasm for taking part in the class assemblies. Children are able to explain the value of attending Mass. They compose their own prayers, and some have the opportunity to collate these into personal prayer books. Some pupils have only a very limited knowledge and understanding of the Church’s seasons and feasts.

All the children know that they can turn to their teachers if they have a problem or a concern. This is very confidently expressed. The chaplaincy team works hard to provide well planned liturgies which benefit the children and give them good opportunities to reflect and pray. There are opportunities for the children to visit places of spiritual significance, such as the planned visit to the convent in Stroud. The school has good links with its parishes; this supports and enhances the quality of sacramental preparation of the children.

Most children make steady progress in RE during their time at the school. In the majority of lessons, children settle down to work and apply themselves conscientiously. Children express their enjoyment of RE lessons and are able to talk about the topics they are exploring. Across the school, attainment is satisfactory but in the early years, examples of good learning were observed.

Leaders and managers

Grade 3

The school’s leaders are very committed to the school and its Catholic mission. They have identified the school’s strengths and the areas for improvement. Plans to move the school forward are in place. Time constraints have reduced the possibilities for monitoring, but of this the leaders are aware. The Senior Leadership Team works hard to provide a good curriculum for the pupils. This curriculum provides opportunities for the children to reflect and their spiritual and moral development is good. A pleasing level of co-operation between the pupils, staff and the leadership team is evident in the school.

The introduction of the new RE scheme, "Come and See", has provided the school with the opportunity to undertake training in the teaching of RE. This has led to an agreed approach to planning. The new scheme is fully in use. Good resources are available. The RE co-ordinator is generous with her use of time and expertise in the support of colleagues. A monitoring plan is in place but there has been little formal observation of RE teaching this year. The cycle for the monitoring of the children's work in RE had to be postponed as it was scheduled to take place at the same time as the OFSTED Section 5 inspection.

The four members of the IEB are working hard to support and challenge the leadership in the school. They are fully aware of their duties as laid down in law and by the Church. They share a clear view of what needs to be improved in the school and have put strategies in place to take the school forward. The IEB member with responsibility for RE is working closely with the RE co-ordinator and this is having a very positive effect in the school.

The school leaders have created a very welcoming school. A range of activities is provided to promote an awareness of the lives and needs of people from around the world. Children are able to talk about their fund raising efforts to support CAFOD and are regularly given the opportunity to explore its work. The school also has links with local faith groups and charities which are well established. These make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Parents express their support of the school and feel happy to approach leaders and teachers at any time.

Provision

Grade 3

Collective worship is well planned. The chaplaincy team works hard to provide good opportunities for worship. There is a clear timetable that ensures that pupils enjoy a variety of worship. Children attend mass regularly and take part in the preparation of the liturgy. They are also given the opportunities to take part in other forms of worship such as class assemblies and the annual passion play. Special times in the Church's year are recognised in the school by special services. Prayer is an important part of the life of the school. All classrooms have neat prayer tables which are dressed in the appropriate liturgical colour. The school also has a prayer garden, though the use of this facility could be developed further.

Overall, the standard of teaching in RE lessons is satisfactory, though some lessons were judged good and one had outstanding features. Lessons are planned in detail with clear learning foci and ICT is widely used to support learning. In the best lessons there is good questioning and opportunities for learning are seized and well used by teachers. Teaching assistants are well deployed. Pupils' work is clearly marked and children know how to use the teachers' comments to try and make progress. In the majority of lessons observed, children were engaged in their work and applied themselves to the tasks in hand.

The school devotes 10% of teaching time to RE as laid down by the bishops of England and Wales. It has adopted the Diocesan recommended "Come and See" RE programme. Good evidence of links with other subjects exists and the spiritual and moral well-being of the children is promoted through PHSE lessons and activities such as circle time. Links with the local community, parishes and other faith groups provide good opportunities for the children to reflect on and learn about their faith in a variety of contexts.

The school has a broadly accurate picture of the pupils' achievements. Children's work is assessed in line with national expectations. The school takes part in the process of looking at pupils' work from the local Catholic schools so that standards can be compared and agreed. Pupils are able to understand their grades and are given guidance as to how they can improve their standards through the comments the teachers write in their books. The assessment books in RE are becoming a good record of children's individual progress. There are plans to introduce the "I can" statements. These will fully involve the children in the assessment of their work and are intended to promote their progress. Achievement is celebrated in the school as part of the life of the school.

The inspectors would like to thank all the members of the community of St Ethelbert's for their warm welcome and co-operation during the inspection.