

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

ST ANTHONY'S VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Farnham Road, Farnham Royal, SL2 3AA

URN. 110040

Head Teacher: Mrs M Stacey
Chair of Governors: Mr J Hayes

Inspector: Mr J Flanagan
Associate Inspector: Mrs K Yuen

Date of Inspection: 24 April 2012

Date Report Issued: 8th May 2012

Date of previous Inspection: 6th May 2009

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

Information about the school

St Anthony's Catholic Primary School is a large primary school with 464 pupils on roll of whom almost 77% are Catholic. It serves the two parishes of St Anthony and The Divine Mercy. The children come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and about half are of Polish heritage. The majority of the pupils speak English as a second language and 36 languages are recorded as being spoken by pupils in the school. Many pupils join the school speaking little or no English. The number of pupils who join and leave the school at other than the usual times is above average. The number of children with special educational needs and disabilities is broadly average. The majority (68%) of the teaching staff are Catholic.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Satisfactory 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

St Anthony's is a good Catholic school with several outstanding features including the head teacher's leadership, community cohesion and the provision of prayer and chaplaincy. Children are proud of their school and make good progress during their time at the school. Levels of achievement are good and sometimes outstanding. Teaching is at least good in nearly all lessons. There is a very positive sense of community within the school and the mission statement is clearly understood and lived out by all members.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

Since the last inspection, there have been sound improvements in the leadership of RE and in its delivery. Many staff have undertaken training, including four teachers working for the Catholic Teachers' Certificate. Assessment of RE is well established. A thriving chaplaincy team is making an outstanding contribution to the life of the school.

A thorough and detailed self-evaluation of the religious life of the school had been carried out prior to the inspection involving all the teaching staff. However, the governing body has had no involvement in the process and no action has been taken as a result of the self-evaluation. This situation is recognised by school leaders as one they plan to change.

The head teacher's leadership of and vision for the school is outstanding. In this she is well supported by the senior leadership and governing body. They share a deep seated commitment to strengthening even further the Catholic life of the school and have identified ways to ensure this occurs.

The capacity of the school's leadership team to maintain and develop the school's effectiveness is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Include the self-evaluation of the religious life of the school in the overall school self-evaluation cycle
- Develop ways of monitoring the effectiveness of the provision for the Catholic life of the school

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 2

All pupils approached knew the school's mission statement instantly, and could explain it in relation to their lives at school. A great deal of time and thought is devoted to providing pupils with opportunities to become involved in the life of the school. As a result they are able to make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school. There are four pupil groups who meet regularly to oversee aspects of school life. These groups also make suggestions for improvements which they are allowed to develop. Children are able to talk fluently about what they have achieved and feel valued for their contributions. Children are proud of being at St Anthony's and feel safe and cared for within the school community.

Children act reverently during prayer time and assembly. They show that they are aware of the importance of such times. They are able to talk about how they contribute to such occasions and how they value the opportunities that they have to take part in prayer and worship. Children can explain in detail how the facilities such as the prayer and memory gardens are used. During assembly children sing well and participate with enthusiasm.

Chaplaincy is well developed and enthusiastically directed in the school. It is accessible to all the pupils and they respond very positively. As a result their spiritual lives are significantly enriched. They are able to take part in prayer groups and comment on how special that makes them feel. The pupils had clearly benefited from the recent residential experience which had been spiritually based. Chaplaincy makes a powerful contribution to the well-being of the children.

Many children make very good progress in RE during their time in the school. This stands as a significant achievement as many join the school speaking little or no English. Most pupils try hard in lessons and behaviour is good. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average; an outcome that reflects the hard work done by the school.

Leaders and Managers

Grade 2

The school's leaders and managers are very committed to offering the best they can for the children of St Anthony's. The head teacher's leadership is outstanding. There are clear action plans for aspects of the religious life of the school such as Chaplaincy. A complete self-evaluation of the religious life of the school has been undertaken by the staff. The children are able to speak confidently about the distinctive nature of the school. Both staff and children display a high regard for the Catholic life of the school.

The monitoring of the teaching of RE is good and is centred on the annual book audit when a number of staff examine pupils' books in detail. This is timetabled into the school's monitoring programme. Teachers' planning is also monitored. The provision for pupils of differing abilities is a feature of this monitoring. The findings are reported to teachers and action for improvement is outlined. As a result, most pupils make good progress in their work in RE and at times this progress is outstanding.

The governing body is very proud of the school and seeks to offer clear leadership. They discharge their statutory and canonical duties effectively. Relationships with staff and parents are good. There are clearly established routes for governors to follow to oversee the curriculum. There is a committee devoted to the Catholic Life and Community within the school. Governors visit the school regularly. However, they are not yet involved in the self-evaluation of the school's religious life and so are not in a strong position to offer support and challenge in taking the school forward. This they recognise and seek to address.

The promotion of community cohesion within the school is outstanding. The school is a fully inclusive community and relationships are strong and harmonious. The children are offered the opportunity to gain a varied knowledge of people from other walks of life and in different cultures. This is achieved by means of an impressive number of activities ranging from links with communities in the local area to those in Uganda and Sri Lanka, the latter one having been established through the Sri Lankan school contacting the school via its blog. There are also many examples of the children supporting these communities such as the raising of funds to help pay for a new school roof. Links with the parishes and the other local Catholic schools are strong and provide the children with opportunities to extend their awareness and develop their faith.

Provision

Grade 1

The quality of the prayer life and chaplaincy provided by the school is outstanding. The school abounds with high quality and appropriate displays and prayer foci which create a deeply spiritual environment. The school has recently developed a well planned memory garden to commemorate deceased friends and family, and there is a valued prayer garden in the centre of the school. School worship is well organised and plays a significant part in the life of the school. The chaplaincy team is vibrant and members speak with real enthusiasm for their work. They run regular prayer groups for children and adults which are well attended and valued by all who attend. The team also supports people in need and knows how to access relevant support when needed.

The overall standard of teaching in RE lessons is good and several examples of outstanding practice were observed. Planning of lessons is clear and provision is made for children of all abilities to make progress. Effective and appropriate use of ICT is commonly employed to make learning fun. Several examples of drama and role play being successfully used to encourage learning were observed. All books are fully marked and some provide examples of teachers taking the time to write thoughtful comments to which the children respond and make progress as result. Teaching assistants are always used effectively and they make a significant contribution to pupil attainment.

The provision of the religious curriculum for the school is outstanding. Over 10% of curriculum time is devoted to the teaching of RE. A wide range of additional activities such as the celebration of saints' days and retreats form an integral part of the school's life. The numbers involved in the Easter bonnet and egg worlds activities to mark Easter are a good reflection of the children's participation in the religious curriculum. The children speak enthusiastically of their involvement in these activities. Time has also been devoted to making RE a vital and active part of the creative curriculum that the school is developing.

The school tracks pupils' progress in RE using the INCERTS system. This is well established and provides a useful means to follow the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. Challenges are set for children in their work. Some evidence of pupils being involved in the assessment of their work was noted. As a result of this work, most pupils make at least good progress in RE and sometimes this progress is outstanding.

The inspectors would like to express their thanks and appreciation to the head teacher, staff, governors and children for their warm welcome to St Anthony's and for the open and honest ways in which all their questions were answered.