

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
URN 102997

The Federation of St Elphege's Catholic Schools
St Elphege's Catholic Junior School
Mollison Drive
Wallington
SM6 9HY

Chair of Governors Mr Tom Taplin
Headteacher Mrs Frances Hawkes
Inspectors Mrs Maureen Hughes
Mrs Angela Ireland

Inspection date 19 May 2008

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
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Introduction

Description of the school

St Elphege's Catholic Junior School is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Sutton Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Sutton LA. The principal parish which the school serves is St Elphege's, Wallington. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 82%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10% in Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 7 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 233. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. Around 22% of the pupils receive extra support in class. The majority of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds. The largest group is Black African. There are also families of Irish Traveller heritage and many from Sri Lanka. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is well above average. In 2006 the school federated with the adjoining infant school and the schools now share a headteacher, leadership team and governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

St Elphege's Catholic Junior School is a good and improving school with many strong features that identify it as truly Catholic. It is totally committed to celebrating diversity and to the welfare, happiness and education of every pupil. The excellent partnership with home and parish nourishes provision and makes the school a supportive, inclusive community. After a period of instability, the present headteacher has brought about the changes necessary to secure a strong Catholic ethos, good provision and higher standards. Governors and the staff team are united in their commitment to improvement, and sound self-evaluation means the school has identified the correct priorities. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. They pray with confidence, have a well developed sense of responsibility and demonstrate a mature understanding of the needs of others. They benefit from consistently good teaching of religious education and achieve levels that are broadly in line with national expectations. Some of the more able pupils could achieve higher standards if they were given opportunities for more extensive study. The assessment process has rightly been identified as an area for development. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and many new systems have been put in place to secure improvement. With such strong commitment to its future, the school has excellent capacity for yet further improvement.

Grade 2

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

- Develop assessment by raising confidence in the use of attainment levels and by introducing systems to track pupil progress
- Raise attainment by providing a range of focussed activities to challenge the more able pupils.

The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

After a period of instability in leadership, the school is now moving forward at a remarkable pace under federation. The headteacher has worked tirelessly to bring about change for the better. By her inspirational leadership, she has injected new vigour into the school and created a strong Catholic ethos, in which staff and pupils flourish academically, socially and spiritually. She provides clear direction to a strong leadership team who monitor teaching and learning rigorously and evaluate their own contribution to school improvement. Their work is having an impact on all areas of school life. With all teachers working as a cohesive team, the school is a truly reflective community. Governors provide outstanding support to the school and have shown considerable commitment and sensitivity in the years leading up to federation. They keep abreast of new initiatives through a comprehensive training programme and are extremely knowledgeable about the school's strengths and priorities for development. They are proactive in monitoring the Catholic life of the school through the role of link governor and visit the school regularly to engage in constructive and often challenging debate. The Mission Statement "With God all things are possible" underpins all that is done within and beyond the school community. It reflects the school's commitment to nurturing each person as valuable and to encouraging personal endeavour. Pupils have interpreted the Mission Statement through the Golden Rules so know how it influences the way they live their lives. Their spiritual and moral development is outstanding. It is effectively promoted through excellent systems of behaviour management and through positive affirmation. Relationships in the school are exceptionally positive and pupils are courteous, respectful and friendly towards adults and each other. Their behaviour is exemplary. Pastoral care is outstanding because it is based on personal knowledge of pupils' needs. Strong management of provision for vulnerable pupils, for those with learning difficulties and for those with English as a second language, ensures their needs are identified early and addressed by well targeted support. The school sees itself as the heart of the community, so partnerships with families and the parish are excellent. One parent summed it up by saying "I cannot thank the staff at the school enough for everything they do. The care and attention they give to their pupils and families is amazing." Another spoke of "a strong feeling of belonging to the parish community within the school." This is echoed by the parish priest who considers the two schools to be integral to the parish. He visits regularly and makes a significant impact on the pastoral and spiritual life of the school community. All are to be congratulated on the dynamic teamwork between home, school and parish.

Grade 1

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

Prayer is central to the life of the school. Collective worship is well planned to reflect community celebrations, the liturgical year and the "Here I Am" programme. An interesting range of provision, carefully matched to the different ages and abilities of the pupils, ensures they remain engaged. They were immediately involved when the headteacher shared memories of her grandmother with them during an excellent assembly about Corpus Christi. By making a link between remembering people we love and remembering Jesus through the Eucharist, pupils were offered the chance to make sense of the Gospel in relation to their own lives. Their response was reverent and their singing joyful. Many further opportunities for prayer are provided throughout the school day and during May, even before registration, pupils pray the Rosary together. Each classroom has a beautiful focal point for prayer, which is well used to support personal reflection. Every religious education lesson includes a time for prayer and teachers create a calm atmosphere through the use of candles and quiet music. A particularly good example was seen in Year 3 where the pupils filled a toolbox with "tools" to maintain friendship, while reading their personal prayers.

The parish priest celebrates Mass in school each week and the school organises a parish children's Mass at the church every term. By preparing the readings and prayers, pupils and their families feel part of a praying community. The liturgical life of the school offers excellent provision for moral and spiritual development. Pupils are asked to consider issues beyond their everyday experience and to consider their place in the world.

Grade 1

Community Cohesion

Pupils come from a wide range of social, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and, as one of them said, "All are welcome" in this very inclusive school. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are very well integrated into every aspect of school life and their presence enriches the community. Diversity of all kinds is celebrated. Staff, are committed to developing harmony, tolerance and justice for all, so there is a strong acknowledgement that every pupil is of equal worth. The result is a happy, cohesive community in which pupils learn how to be good citizens. They know that their voice will be heard through the School Council and have been successful in developing the pond. All pupils pray together easily and share their personal thoughts and aspirations. Through education in other world faiths, they are beginning to understand that people have different beliefs and that these are to be respected. This is helped by staff and parents from other faith backgrounds sharing their ideology, bringing in religious artefacts and praying with the pupils. All are quick to show concern for the well being of each other and are particularly supportive of the more vulnerable in their community. They recognise their responsibilities to those less fortunate than themselves and support various local and global charities, such as the ACE of Clubs and CAFOD. Of particular

note is the focus charity of the year “Christ’s Hospital in Ghana” which has close links with one of the pupil’s families. The school is very much a beacon in the local community. The hall is used for Sunday Mass, strong partnerships have been established with colleges and secondary schools and families know they can access any support they may need.

Grade 1

Religious education

Achievement and standards

Pupils enter the school with average attainment, having made good progress in the Infant School. Many still have language and communication difficulties due to the range of languages spoken in the home but all have benefited from a firm foundation in religious teaching. In the past, progress has been inconsistent but it is now improving, so many pupils reach, and some exceed, national expectations by the time they reach Year 6. Due to some lack of confidence in using the new levels of attainment, teachers have occasionally under-valued pupils’ achievement. Lessons certainly show that pupils are working at higher levels and achieving higher standards than indicated. This is particularly evident in the well developed oral skills displayed during discussions. Pupils reach good levels of religious literacy. They are developing mature empathetic skills which help them to deepen their understanding of persons and events in Scripture. In Year 6 they were able to identify the barriers to trust and friendship and articulated the importance of attitudes in accepting individuals as part of a community. Pupils’ books, which are generally well presented, show an interesting range of work using skills gained in other curriculum areas.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers plan their lessons carefully with clear learning objectives which are shared with pupils. In general, they display a secure knowledge and understanding of the religious education programme and have coherent expectations of outcomes. The less-experienced teachers work alongside their senior colleagues and are well supported by them. A good range of teaching strategies is employed so that lessons are lively and pupils are engaged. For example, “Talk partners” were used to very good effect in both classes visited. Teachers relate learning to the pupils’ own lives and frequently share their own experiences to make lessons interesting. Good questioning challenges pupils to extend their thinking and encourages use of key vocabulary. Creative activities stimulate pupils but are not always sufficiently demanding for the more able. These pupils should be offered more opportunities for lengthy, open-ended research to broaden their understanding. Teaching assistants make a very valuable contribution to pupils’ learning because they are well trained and understand

how to address particular needs. An outstanding example of such work was seen in a Year 3 class, where a small group of pupils was encouraged to identify the attributes of a good friend. On-going assessment is built into planning and a variety of strategies is used, including constructive marking. Teachers mark work thoroughly and involve pupils in considering how much progress they are making. However, the information is not used consistently to plan for individual need. Formal assessment is undertaken according to Diocesan requirements, but use of the new attainment levels is not yet embedded in practice and pupil progress cannot be accurately tracked. Teachers are unsure about the process and so it has been correctly identified by the school as an area for development. Parents and carers are very involved in their children's learning and after receiving regular curriculum information, support them at home.

Grade 2

The religious education curriculum

A well planned curriculum, based on the Diocesan recommended "Here I Am" programme and supported by a good range of resources, builds on the experience of home and ensures relevance for the pupils. It relates to the local community and takes account of social and cultural diversity. Very good planning enables teachers to build progression into the programme, so that pupils can consolidate their learning and make links to their own lives. Around 10% of taught curriculum time is devoted to religious education but it also extends into other subject areas. Effective cross curricular links, especially with art, drama and ICT, provide opportunities for creativity and serve to emphasise the importance of religious education in all the school does throughout the day. The parish priest makes a significant contribution to the curriculum by leading discussions, setting up workshops for teachers and parents and by conducting pupil visits to the church. He aims to support everyone in deepening their personal faith. The curriculum is further enriched by a number of visits and visitors. The school welcomes other faith leaders, including the Sutton rabbi and has set up links with the Guru Nanak School so that pupils learn more about Sikhism. The programme for personal, health and social education, underpinned by SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning) promotes the pupils' wellbeing. It contributes to their spiritual and moral development by encouraging them to recognise the rights and responsibilities of the individual and of others in the community. It prepares them well to deal with the sensitive issues of life.

Grade 2

Leadership and management

The governors, headteacher and RE Co-ordinator provide clear direction for religious education and ensure it has a high profile in the school. The development of RE teaching and the prayer life of the school are key priorities, as evidenced by their inclusion in the School Improvement Plan. The RE Co-ordinator and shadow co-ordinator work to an agreed action plan and, with the RE link governor, focus on monitoring and evaluating its success. The co-ordinator has worked extremely hard to ensure consistency across the two schools, by identifying and sharing good practice. She is a very reflective practitioner and a role model for all staff. She has brought highly effective systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning from the Infant School and they are beginning to make an impact on attainment. Through a systematic programme of lesson observations, she identifies strengths and gives sensitive, developmental feedback to staff so they can improve their practice. She also monitors teachers' planning and pupils' books, to ensure they match the expectations of the religious education programme. She has been undertaking moderation of pupils' work to measure the consistency of assessment information, and after determining that teachers are unsure about the requirements of each level of attainment, has planned further training for them. She reinforces her excellent monitoring programme with pupil conferencing to assure herself of the pupils' understanding. This places her in an ideal position to know what is required to raise levels of attainment in religious education. Staff are very well supported in their teaching and all happily embrace the Catholic ethos of the school. The many attractive displays proclaim the school as distinctively Catholic and celebrate the pupils' many talents and achievements.

Grade 1