

DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH VALIDATION REPORT



St Swithun Wells Catholic Primary School, Chandler's Ford

Hillcrest Avenue, Chandler's Ford, Eastleigh, Hampshire SO53 2JP

Validation dates 4 and 17 March 2014

Overall effectiveness: Good with outstanding features

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

This is a good school.

- St Swithun Wells is an outstanding example of a Catholic school community, where the spirit of the Gospel is lived out in all aspects of the school's life. The mission statement and Christian ethos have a very positive impact. Excellent relationships between adults and pupils lead to a loving and trusting environment, where all achieve their full potential.
- The dedicated leadership and vision shown by the headteacher are key strengths of the school.
- The links with the parish are outstanding, ensuring that there is a joint approach to each liturgical season, enabling families to connect with the life of the parish. The outstanding, long-term support of the parish priest of St Swithun Wells has been of great benefit to the school.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. In the questionnaire sent out ahead of this validation an overwhelming majority was positive about all aspects of school life.
- The school makes an outstanding contribution to the life of the diocese.
- By the time they leave the school the children are able to articulate and demonstrate a high level of RE knowledge and its application to their lives.
- The partnership between the RE manager and headteacher ensures a systematic approach to subject development and improvement. This is having a positive impact on standards.
- The quality of teaching is overall of a good quality. Elements of outstanding practice were seen in both the RE work scrutiny and in one of the lesson observations.
- Spiritual and moral development are outstanding.
- In the school there is a rich and varied range of worship, including liturgies, Masses and class worship, all of which provide children with high quality opportunities to develop their relationship with God. The school is fervently committed to responding to the call by Pope Francis and Bishop Philip to put faith into action and has initiated a number of excellent and thoughtful projects to make this a reality.
- School leaders, including governors, inspire the community to share in a strong sense of vision and mission. There is a constant drive for improvement and insistence on high standards in all aspects.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

In order to continue to move forward, the school should consider the following.

- As already recognised by the leadership in the school, ensure that the good practice seen in the majority of year groups is embedded across the school.
- Develop mechanisms to enable older children to coach and mentor younger children to prepare and lead class worship.

Full Report

The school as a Catholic community

The school community:	Outstanding
The wider community:	Outstanding

- The school's mission statement and Christian ethos have a very positive impact on school life; this is evident in the daily actions, behaviours and relationships within the school community. The school is welcoming and fully inclusive. Pupil buddies and young interpreters play a key role in welcoming new families.
- The school begins each year by focussing on the mission statement with staff and children. However, thought should be given to carrying out a more in-depth review of the mission statement next September in order to ensure that the views of all new members of the community are incorporated.
- The school, including governors, has established very good communication links with parents. Their views are welcomed, as was demonstrated in the Visions Evening held last year.
- The links between the parish and school are strong and mutually supportive. School and parish are working closely together to encourage greater attendance at Sunday Mass, for example, the project in Advent linked to collecting nativity figures. This is a very good example of school and parish working together and once the initiative is worked through the successful elements should be shared across the diocese.
- St Swithun Wells School is very much a diocesan school, offering support in a number of key areas, for example, the headteacher is the chair of the Primary Catholic Partnership SCITT and is also a key validator; other staff were involved in facilitating a middle leaders' development programme and the RE manager currently leads the local RE cluster.
- Through a recent Africa Week and links with a school in Zambia, the children are given the opportunity to gain a balanced view of this diverse continent.
- Children demonstrate outstanding support for a large number of charitable events. They respond with empathy and generosity to world disasters.

Curriculum religious education

Attainment and progress:	Good
Quality of teaching:	Good
Leadership and management of RE:	Good

- Pupils in the school value RE and recognise that it can help them in their daily lives. In the lessons observed as part of the validation, pupils were able to draw on knowledge of Scripture and relate the messages to everyday life.
- Teaching is judged to be good by the school. Teaching observed on the day and evidence in the pupils' books validate this judgement. Elements of outstanding practice were seen in both, for example, high level questioning, children's engagement and high expectations within teaching and exploration of religious concepts and ideas within the pupils' books.
- Dialogue marking is being increasingly used to develop understanding further.
- Work has begun to further develop assessment against national levels for RE. The plans in place to help staff become more confident in this area should have a positive impact on teaching and learning.
- High quality RE displays in each classroom help to focus learning and are interactive, with children's responses to key questions being added as the topic progresses.

- The leadership of the RE manager is outstanding. She is having a very positive impact on standards and is an excellent role model to other staff, who are appreciative of the support she offers. The leadership and support provided by the headteacher and RE governor help to ensure that the place of RE in the school is given a very high status.
- The rigorous monitoring of RE ensures that any issues are identified and plans put in place to address them, with appropriate follow up.

Spiritual and moral development

Spiritual development:	Outstanding
Moral development:	Outstanding

- There is a varied range of worship, including liturgies, Masses and class worship, which all provide children with high quality opportunities to develop their relationship with God. Other activities, such as the Travelling Nativity and Faith in Action, involve the whole family.
- Children respond positively and with reverence to times of prayer. This has been enhanced with the introduction of prayer partners – children are supportive of one another and help one another to pray.
- Currently, older children in the school have the opportunity to plan and lead class worship. The school should consider using their expertise to coach younger children in this important role.
- Excellent support is given by the local clergy. The traditions and practices of the Church are well-developed and contribute to the sense that all at the school are part of the family of God.
- The school environment fully supports the worship in the school, providing opportunities for children to experience the awe and wonder of God’s creation and joy of living.
- The school is committed to responding to the call by Pope Francis and Bishop Philip to put faith into action and has initiated a number of projects to make this a reality.
- The children in the school demonstrate outstanding behaviour and Christian attitudes in their relationships, with a clear sense of right and wrong. Key factors promoting this include:
 - The very good role models provided by the staff and older children in the school.
 - The consistent reinforcement of Gospel values.
 - The high expectations of pupils.
- Pupils in the school are justly proud of their school; they describe the school as ‘a place where you can find out about Jesus and everyone is nice and kind and there is lots to do’.

Leadership and management: Outstanding

- School leaders provide a strong and effective model of Christian leadership, where all members of the school community are valued. They inspire the community to share in a strong sense of vision and mission, resulting in a highly collaborative and successful school, with a positive ethos.
- The rigorous and effective approach to the monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the life of the school enables the school to constantly challenge itself. There is a constant drive for improvement and insistence on high standards in all aspects.
- The governing body are strong supporters of the school and also act as a critical friend. They have recently re-organised the way they work; this different approach will need to be evaluated in terms of its effectiveness in both keeping governors informed and in moving the school forward. If successful, it may be a model they would like to share with other schools.
- Good progress has been made on the issues identified for improvement in the last validation, particularly in implementing a more robust system of on-going monitoring and evaluation of RE and in developing a greater sense of multiculturalism throughout the school.

School details

Name of school	St. Swithun Wells Catholic Primary School
URN:	116383
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll:	248
Chair of Governors:	Ita O’Kelly
Headteacher:	Ursula Clark

St Swithun Wells is a Voluntary Aided Catholic Primary school serving the parish of St Swithun Wells. It is situated in Chandlers Ford, an area to the North of the City of Southampton. With 248 children on roll, St Swithun Wells is an average-sized primary school. Most year groups consist of one class, the foundation stage and Year One are made up of two smaller classes. Of its teaching staff 57% are Catholic, with 45% of support staff also being Catholic. The percentage of children eligible for free school meals is 6.5%, 10% are in receipt of pupil premium funding. Pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs (5%) is below the national average. There are 3 pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Approximately 64% of pupils on roll are from a White British background. The remainder are from a wide mix of ethnic backgrounds. Approximately 26% are learning English as an additional language. This is an increasing trend.

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

Robert Dare	Lead Validator
Tony Murray	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 whole school and class worship.
- Observations of teaching and learning in RE, including joint observations with senior staff.
- Pupil work scrutiny.
- Feedback of key findings to the leadership team and representatives of the governing body.

Conclusion

The validators would like to thank the headteacher, assistant headteacher, RE manager, staff, governors, the parish priest, parents and pupils of St Swithun Wells 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.