

DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH VALIDATION REPORT



St. Mary's Catholic Primary School

Cookham Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 7EG

URN: 139882

Date of previous validation 4 December 2012

Date of this validation 1 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Previous validation:	Outstanding
	This validation:	Good

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 with outstanding features.

- St Mary's is an outstanding example of a Catholic school community, where 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 are encouraged to live out their mission statement of *learning and loving on their journey with Jesus*.
- The new headteacher and RE leader provide a strong and effective model of Christian leadership, where all are valued. They inspire the community to share in a strong sense of vision and mission, resulting in a collaborative and successful school with a positive ethos where RE and worship are at the heart of the life of the school.
- The regular support of the parish priest is of great benefit to the school.
- St Mary's is a school where strengths are recognised and celebrated and any areas for development that are identified are quickly addressed.
- The highly skilled and dedicated governing body play a key role in acting as critical friends.
- The school's Catholic ethos is enhanced by the high quality of the physical environment and the many outstanding displays produced by teaching assistants, celebrating its Catholic and cultural identity.
- The quality of teaching is good and standards in RE are good.
- Excellent relationships within and beyond the classroom enhance learning.
- Staff and children act as witnesses to their faith through their support of one another and their support for local, national and international charities.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. An overwhelming majority of parents was very positive about all aspects of school life.
- Spiritual and moral development are outstanding. Pupils are outstanding ambassadors for the school and speak about their school with pride. Their outstanding behaviour and attitudes are underpinned by their knowledge and living out of the school's mission statement: children said '*this school takes to heart so many good things and helps you to realise you can change to be the best person you can be*'.
- The very positive impact of stewardship can be seen in the daily life of the community.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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

- Review planning to ensure success criteria are driven by the national RE driver words.
- Ensure there is consistent challenge for all pupils in their thinking and learning in RE. This could be achieved through more opportunities for pupils to voice their opinion and improved task design.
- Ensure feedback to pupils on their work in RE is effective and consistent across the school.

Full Report

The school as a Catholic community

The school community:	Outstanding
The wider community:	Outstanding

- St Mary's is an outstanding example of a Catholic school community, where 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 are encouraged to live out their mission statement of learning and loving on their journey with Jesus.
- The mission statement is firmly embedded into all aspects of school life, enabling children and staff to *'learn and love on their journey with Jesus'*. Pupils spoken to talked confidently and gave examples of how they do their best to put the words into action.
- Children throughout the school were passionate in their discussions regarding what stewardship means to them and the decisions that they make in their lives, particularly through the Eco Council.
- The school has a calm and welcoming atmosphere. Relationships within the school community are very strong and children respond openly and with confidence.
- The induction of new members of staff to the school reflects the community's commitment to be inclusive, caring and supportive.
- The Catholic ethos is strongly evident within the school environment. High quality displays, produced by the teaching assistants contribute to an attractive and purposeful community of learning.
- Parents hold the school in high regard. They recognise it as a caring Catholic community, where they are made to feel welcome and their children are happy.
- The School Council and the Eco Council bring the children together so that they have a highly vocal pupil voice in the school.
- Children are given opportunities to be role models through Head boy and girl; house captains; sports ambassadors and infant buddies.
- The school has a visible presence within St Joseph's Church. Classes regularly attend mass in the parish in spite of the distance of the church from the school. The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school, offering support when required and regularly joining the children for lunch.
- All members of the school community demonstrate their full commitment to the principles of discipleship, through support for Food Share, CAFOD and Anguilla.

Curriculum religious education

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

- The evidence in the pupils' books, the quality of teaching and discussions with pupils all combine to show that attainment and progress in RE are good, with some elements of outstanding practice observed on the day of the validation.
- In the lessons observed as part of the validation, evidence was seen of pupils reflecting on Pentecost. In the best lessons, learning was enhanced by teachers' subject knowledge, links to liturgy, good questioning, use of talk partners, personal experience and links to prior learning. Pupils reflected on how they could be Jesus' modern day disciples and the younger children linked the awe and wonder of blowing bubbles to the fruits of the Holy Spirit.
- Pupils demonstrated a positive attitude to learning and behaviour was very good.
- Planning and success criteria need to be driven by the RE driver words. Task design needs to be improved in order to ensure all pupils are appropriately challenged and supported. Pupils need to be challenged in their thinking and allowed more opportunities to voice their opinions. There also needs to be greater reference to scripture, particularly in Key Stage 2, to underpin learning.

- RE displays are of a high standard but need to be used more as working walls that include key questions, vocabulary and pupil responses.
- The RE leader, who is also the deputy headteacher, provides tireless and effective support for RE and as a result the subject has a high status within the school
- The headteacher and RE leader monitor the quality of teaching and learning in RE through lesson observations, book scrutinies and assessment data and as a result standards are good.
- The quality of the pupil feedback does not always identify next steps in the learning process.
- The RE governor working party provides good support in overseeing developments in the subject.

Spiritual and moral development

Spiritual development:

Outstanding

Moral development:

Outstanding

- Prayer and worship are integral to the daily life of St. Mary's. The range of worship offered is extensive through masses, assemblies, class liturgies, use of the grotto area and reconciliation services.
- Children's attitudes to worship and spirituality are outstanding, which is evident during acts of worship. Year 1/2 children were able to meditate on the gospel of St John and engage with stillness and reverence.
- The use of prayer bags during Lent and Advent, foster strong home school links.
- Retreat days for years 2 and 6 are valued by the children, allowing them to deepen their relationship with God. The excellent support from the parish priest greatly enhances these opportunities.
- All members of the community are invited to join the school for liturgies and masses.
- The mission statement underpins the moral development of all pupils, with staff providing excellent role models for the children. As a result pupil behaviour at St Mary's is outstanding.
- Children are justifiably proud of their roles as Eco councillors, school councillors, house captains, sports ambassadors, infant buddies and head students.
- The celebration of achievement positively promotes pupil self-esteem and confidence. The children are rewarded for good behaviour and successes are celebrated in a variety of ways such as the celebration assembly and are not limited to academic achievement. The importance of stewardship within the school is recognised through the awarding of a weekly stewardship certificate
- Pupils are thoughtful and reflective, demonstrating the school's excellent provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They describe their school as a place '*where we live sustainably. The adults listen to us, relate to us and help us to follow in Jesus' footsteps*'.

Leadership and management: Outstanding

- The personal witness to the faith given by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher provides a strong vision and direction for the work of the school.
- 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 an insistence on high standards in all aspects of learning.
- A highly skilled and dedicated governing body take a keen interest in the mission, development and progress of the school.
- Morale is very high and staff are committed to the mission, development and success of the school, which is made possible by the unfailing support of senior management and all leaders.
- All staff provide excellent role-models, resulting in outstanding behaviour and spiritual and moral development.
- The robust self-review process is reflective and shared with a range of stakeholders including a Governor Working party who both challenge and support.
- Good progress has been made on the issues identified for improvement in the last validation, particularly with the introduction of the RE working party who have a very clear understanding of the outcomes of the school's monitoring schedule in RE.

School details

Name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll:	297
Chair of Governors:	Hans Daems
Headteacher:	Sandra Barry

St Mary's is a slightly larger than average primary school in the Great Park pastoral area which serves the parish of St Joseph's, Maidenhead. The majority of its pupils are Catholic. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average and 21% of pupils have English as an additional language. In March 2018 the school was awarded the 'Greenest School' award as part of the Green Heart Hero Awards in recognition of their environmental work.

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

Nuala Oster	Lead Validator
Helena Pickering	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 the headteacher and Key Stage 1 leader
- Pupil work scrutiny.
- Feedback of key findings to the senior management team and RE governors.

Conclusion

The validators would like to thank the headteacher, RE leader, staff, governors, the parish priest, parents and pupils of St Mary's 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.