

# DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH VALIDATION REPORT



## St. Swithun Wells Catholic Primary School

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

URN: 116383  
Date of previous validation: 17 March 2014  
Date of this validation: 8 February 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous validation:	Good
	<b>This validation:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>

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

### This is an outstanding school

- The school's mission statement, '*As God's children, we learn, achieve and succeed together. We touch the lives of others by our faith, prayers, words and actions*' is firmly embedded in the life of the school, with all members of the community taking an active part in living it out.
- Excellent relationships between all member of the community lead to a loving and trusting environment where all are encouraged and supported to achieve their full potential.
- The headteacher has a strong and ambitious Catholic vision for the school. This vision is known and actively supported by all in the community.
- The school plays a pivotal role in the local Catholic community. Both the previous and current parish priests are strong in their support for the school and all it contributes to the pupils' spiritual well-being and to the life of the parish. The school is recognised as a centre of good practice across the diocese and often hosts visits from other schools.
- Religious education (RE) is central to the life of the school. The outstanding support of the RE leader, together with the strong support given by the headteacher, helps ensure teachers deliver good quality teaching, leading to outstanding progress and high standards in the subject.
- Pupils are outstanding ambassadors for the school and speak about their school with pride. One commented, '*Our school is all one family of Christ which is joyful and happy!*' Their outstanding behaviour and attitudes are underpinned by their knowledge and living out of the school's mission statement.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. A very large majority was positive about all aspects of school life, particularly the school's role in the local Catholic community, the sense of welcome and the strong relationships based on Gospel values.
- Leaders, including governors, provide a very strong and highly effective model of Christian leadership, where all are valued and supported.
- The outstanding spiritual life of the school is very much at its heart. Pupils are provided with a wide range of spiritual opportunities which they value and embrace with enthusiasm. Older pupils are excellent role models to the younger children.
- Pupils in the school demonstrate outstanding behaviour and Christian attitudes, giving of their time and talents to support those in need, for example, as young interpreters or fund-raising.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

As already identified by the school, the following should be addressed:

- Take the opportunity of the new assessment framework for RE to ensure a greater consistency in planning. This will help enable all staff to deliver a robust and focussed curriculum.

- Review the school's PSHE curriculum based on the new national guidance for Relationships Education, ensuring the resulting scheme of work reflects and supports Catholic principles.

## Full Report

### The school as a Catholic community

The school community:	Outstanding
The wider community:	Outstanding

- The school has recently undertaken a review of its mission statement involving all members of the school community. The new statement is welcomed and understood by all groups and can be seen being lived out on a daily basis. The addition of six learning values based on the CHRIST acronym is an effective addition.
- Relationships are strong in the school and help ensure all feel welcomed and supported. There is a comprehensive and effective induction for both staff and pupils, with the centrality and importance of the Catholic ethos given a high prominence.
- The Catholic ethos is strongly evident within the school environment. High quality displays, contribute to an attractive and purposeful community of learning.
- The vast majority of parents hold the school in very high regard with all statements on the parental survey being agreed by over 92% of parents, one parent commented, *'We are extremely happy with this wonderful school and its religious values and teaching.'*
- There are very good systems of communication, ensuring all stakeholders are well-informed and regularly updated. The school's newsletter and website reflect the importance placed on the Catholic life of the school.
- The school benefits from outstanding support from the local parish priests, they are frequent visitors to the school and offer much valued support for both RE and worship. The contribution of the school to the life of the parish is very much appreciated and welcomed.
- St Swithun Wells is very much a diocesan school, being one of the first to volunteer or to offer support. The headteacher successfully undertakes a number of roles on behalf of the diocese and the school is always represented at diocesan wide events. The school is often used by the diocese as somewhere to send others to observe good practice.
- Stewardship has always been a strong driver for the school and this is most recently seen through its embracing of Pope Francis' *'Laudato Si'* initiative and a move towards embedding Catholic Social Teaching. The school actively reaches out to others, with pupils often taking the lead, for example, the recent *'Holy Crosta Coffee Shop'* to support a charity linked to one of the school's families. Strong links have been established with two local care homes.

### Curriculum religious education

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

- RE in the school has a very high status. The evidence in pupils' books, class books, the consistently good or better quality of teaching, the high levels of achievement and discussions with pupils all combine to show that attainment and progress in RE are outstanding.
- Teaching is judged to be good by the school. Teaching observed on the day and documentation provided by the school both validate this judgement of good, however, it is important to note there are strong elements of outstanding practice in the school. This provides a strong basis for improving teaching further.
- In lessons observed, pupils demonstrated a positive attitude to learning and behaviour was outstanding. Work in the pupils' books has a clear scriptural focus, with opportunities for pupils to reflect on how this impacts on their own lives. Marking is always supportive and is frequently used to further challenge the children's thinking.

- Assessment in RE is currently linked to the 2012 national assessment framework, this will need to be moved to the recently revised framework by September. The school should use this opportunity to ensure a greater consistency in planning. This will enable all staff to deliver a robust and focussed curriculum.
- The RE subject leader and headteacher rigorously monitor RE. Findings are carefully considered and, where appropriate, action taken and appropriate support provided. Governors are regularly kept informed of the strengths and areas for development within the subject.
- The RE leader's passion and drive for the subject underpin her outstanding support for all staff. This enables teachers to deliver lessons with confidence and enthusiasm and ensure that standards in RE are high. Her strong knowledge and experience gives her the confidence and skill to adapt the school's approach to the subject in order to continually seek improvement. She is often called upon to use her skills and knowledge to support other diocesan schools.

## Spiritual and moral development

Spiritual development:

Outstanding

Moral development:

Outstanding

- The school provides a wide range of high quality worship, which allows individual and collective members of the school community to express their relationship with one another and with God, in a reflective and prayerful manner. Strong examples include:
  - The range of celebrations linked to the liturgical year.
  - The many opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship in the school.
  - The organisation of a spiritual retreat for pupils in Year 5.
  - The establishment of the *Spirituality Club* which has also inspired a small group of children to form the *Salvation Club* for Key Stage One children.
- The Prayer Partner worships observed on the day, one led by the class teacher and the other by Year Six children, provided the children with a meditative and prayerful encounter. The class worship observed was also of a high quality with a clear message and opportunities for the children to reflect on its meaning to them and how they could live it out.
- 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 outstanding role models provided by the staff and older children in the school.
  - The high expectations of pupils.
  - The consistent reinforcement of Gospel values through RE and worship and their application in helping children make the right choice.
  - The introduction of the learning values based on the CHRIST acronym.
- Once the new national guidance for Relationships Education is published, the school will need to review its PSHE curriculum to ensure it both reflects national expectations, and reflects and supports Catholic principles.
- Pupils are justifiably proud of their school, commenting, *'St Swithun Wells is a school where teachers are really kind and friendships are very strong'*

## Leadership and management:

Outstanding

- The headteacher's outstanding leadership impacts positively on all aspects of the life of this successful school and outstanding faith community.
- Leaders, including governors, provide a very strong and highly effective model of Christian leadership, where all are valued and supported. There is a constant drive for improvement and insistence on high standards in all areas. The governors interviewed were enthusiastic supporters of the school and are knowledgeable about its strengths and areas for improvement.

- The school has a well-structured and effective approach to the completion of the diocesan self-review process, ensuring all key groups are given opportunities to contribute and that the identified strengths and areas for development reflect the reality in the school.
- Good progress has been made on the issues identified for improvement in the last validation, particularly in supporting older children in coaching the younger children in preparing and leading class worship.

### School details

<b>Name of school:</b>	St Swithun Wells Catholic Primary School
<b>Age range of pupils:</b>	4 - 11
<b>Gender of pupils:</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on roll:</b>	237
<b>Chair of Governors:</b>	Justin Harris
<b>Headteacher:</b>	Ursula Clark

St Swithun Wells is a Voluntary Aided Catholic Primary school serving the parish of St Swithun Wells which is made up of six churches. It is situated in Chandlers Ford, an area to the North of the City of Southampton. With 237 children on roll, St Swithun Wells is an average-sized primary school. Most year groups consist of one class, Years Five and Six are each made up of two smaller classes. Over 80% of the pupils are from Catholic families, and 58% of staff are Catholic, both of which are higher than the diocesan averages. The percentage of children in receipt of pupil premium funding is 3%. Approximately half of pupils on roll are from a White British background. The remainder are from a wide mix of ethnic backgrounds. Approximately 35% 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

Lead Validator: Nuala Oster  
 Assistant Validator: Robert Dare

### 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 collective worship.
- Observations of teaching and learning in RE, including joint observations with members of the school leadership team.
- Pupil work scrutiny.
- Feedback of key findings.

## **Conclusion**

The validators would like to thank the headteacher, deputy headteacher, RE leader, staff, governors, parish priests, 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.