

DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH VALIDATION REPORT



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Ann's Hill Road, Gosport, Hampshire PO12 3NB

URN: 116394

Date of previous validation 8th July 2014

Date of this validation 24th May and 14th June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Previous validation:	Good	
	This validation:	Inadequate	
The school community:	Requires Improvement	Attainment and progress in RE:	Inadequate
The wider community:	Requires Improvement	Quality of teaching in RE:	Inadequate
Spiritual development:	Requires Improvement	Leadership and management of RE:	Inadequate
Moral development:	Requires Improvement	Leadership and management:	Inadequate

This is an inadequate school.

- Members of the school, including leaders, were not able to articulate an understanding of the distinctive nature of the Catholic school and how this should impact on the daily life of the school community.
- Since the last validation, standards in RE have declined significantly. The extent to which pupils acquire knowledge, develop understanding and learn and practise skills in this core subject is inadequate.
- The Catholic life of the school has not been given its rightful prominence and the range and quality of the prayer life in the school has lessened.
- School leaders, including governors, have not paid sufficient attention in monitoring and evaluating the fundamental elements of a Catholic school. Governors have not held school leaders to account.
- There is no evidence to show that any progress has been made on the issues identified for improvement in the last validation.

The school has the following strengths

- The children's behaviour is good; pupils behave considerately towards each other.
- The school has developed a good working relationship with the priests of the parish and with a local religious community.
- The outcomes in early years show children in this stage receive good quality provision in RE.
- Pupils value their school and willingly take on responsibilities that contribute to the Catholic ethos, such as the Rosary Club and organising charitable events.
- The responses on the parent survey were positive and conveyed a trust in the school.
- The governors have been successful in securing a substantive headteacher and deputy headteacher who will be tasked with driving the school forward in terms of developing its Catholic ethos. These key appointments should give the school the capacity to improve.
- The school has fostered charitable links with a range of worthwhile causes. The children particularly valued the links with Macmillan, CAFOD and Rowans Hospice.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

In order to move forward, the school should put in place the following:

- Now that a substantive headteacher and deputy have been recruited, leaders in the school, led by the new headteacher, need to agree and share with the whole community their vision for this Catholic school. This will then need to be supported through a Christ centred mission statement that underpins the daily life of the school.
- Those in leadership positions, including governors, to actively promote, model and embed the Catholic nature of the school.
- Through regular and rigorous monitoring and evaluation, leaders need to regularly hold to account all who hold a responsibility within this area.
- Ensure the centrality of the Catholic life of the school for all members of the school community, especially through the range and quality of the prayer life.
- Leadership and teaching of RE should reflect the core nature of the subject by:
 - Ensuring RE occupies 10% of the teaching timetable.
 - Engaging with the diocese and local Catholic cluster in order to seek advice and support in developing the quality provision of RE.
 - Supporting teachers in planning and delivering high quality RE which:
 - Provides a cohesive learning journey through the relevant unit of work.
 - Identifies RE focussed activities which maximise learning opportunities and supports the overall learning journey.
 - Covers all attainment targets for RE.
 - Ensures all are challenged in RE and opportunities are incorporated that enable children to demonstrate greater depth in the subject.
 - Builds in opportunities for assessment linked to the age related standards for RE.

Full Report

The school as a Catholic community

The school community:

Requires improvement

The wider community:

Requires improvement

- Members of the school need to develop a clear understanding of the distinctive nature of the Catholic school so that Gospel values have a strong influence on the work of the school.
- The children know their mission statement but were not able to explain how it applies to their lives.
- The priests of the parish are very supportive of the school. Links with the parish are good, with the priests celebrating Masses at school, and the school's support of the *Junior Journey in Faith* programme. The school also maintains a working relationship with sisters from St Columbus, Bridgemary, holding a weekly Rosary Club.
- Links are developing with a local Catholic school for support around developing and monitoring the Catholic ethos. Opportunities of support from the diocese have not always been taken up. St Mary's maintains limited diocesan links through attending RE subject leader training and occasionally attending key events such as the annual schools' Mass.
- The school communicates well with parents, ensuring they are kept up to date with what is happening and are given opportunities to come into the school, such as an arts viewing evening. There is a developing positive and trusting relationship between home and the school. This was evidenced by the strong outcomes seen within the parental survey.
- Pupils commented, "*At St Mary's we have lots of people to help us and lunchtimes are really fun as we have a lovely field and play equipment*". The pupils value their school and willingly take on responsibility contributing to school life through presenting at assemblies, Rosary Club and organising charitable events. They would like to further develop these opportunities. Pupils could be given a greater range of opportunities to play a constructive role in the life of the school.
- Members of the school community have demonstrated their commitment to charities through support of local, national and international initiatives, including Rowans Hospice, Macmillan, local food banks and CAFOD.

Curriculum religious education

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

- The extent to which pupils acquire knowledge, develop understanding and learn and practise skills in RE is inadequate. Children make too little progress, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- The status of curriculum RE is too low with the subject not receiving the required 10% of the teaching timetable, nor leadership investing adequately in this core subject.
- Planning and assessment in RE takes too little account of the pupils' prior learning or of their understanding of tasks and is not used effectively to help them improve.
- Expectations are not high enough. Aspects of the teaching of RE seen during the day were judged to require improvement or be inadequate. Teaching fails to promote the pupils' learning, progress or enjoyment.
- Where learning environments are inadequate they are poorly maintained, not always relevant and contribute little to developing pupils' learning in RE.
- Leaders have not driven nor secured improvement in the subject. The newly appointed substantive headteacher and governors recognise the need to develop the strategic direction for this core subject to ensure the profile of RE is high and central to the school curriculum.
- Evidence of the learning taking place in early years and their class and outdoor environments show children in this stage receive good quality provision in RE. This good start is not built on as the children move through the school.

Spiritual and moral development

Spiritual development:	Requires improvement
Moral development:	Requires improvement

- The following aspects of school life contribute to the spiritual development of the pupils:
 - Opportunities to celebrate Mass together as a community.
 - Provision of the Rosary Club
 - Additional worship opportunities such as processions and the Pentecostal art display
- Planned spiritual experiences need to provide greater opportunities for individual prayer.
- Most children responded appropriately to the opportunities for collective worship observed during this validation. A policy for worship needs to be agreed and followed to ensure consistency of approach and for prayer to become engrained in school life.
- The traditions and practices of the Catholic Church need to play a more active part in the life of St Mary's. Input from the priests of the parish and sisters of St Columbus provide a foundation that the school can build upon. One of the priests states, "We have a bright future ahead of us and are confident that St Mary's School will shine as a Catholic school in the future."
- The school recognises how the spiritual development of pupils can be enhanced through the awe and wonder found in the environment, as evidenced in the reception outdoor learning area. There is potential to exploit the outside areas further, along with developing opportunities for awe and wonder in the wider curriculum.
- The school needs to promote a greater understanding of shared values with a common language so that all, including the children, can articulate their faith and how it can help steer their actions and decisions.
- Children were polite and the overall behaviour is good. Pupils behave considerately towards each other. Their behaviour is welcoming and positive. They know the difference between right and wrong and understand the consequences of their own and others' actions and welcome opportunities for reconciliation.
- Pupils value their school, saying, "*At St Mary's we have lots of people to help us and lunchtimes are really fun as we have a lovely field and play equipment.*"
- The children could be given more opportunities to contribute to the life of the school, this is something they would welcome.

Leadership and management:

Inadequate

- Since the last validation standards in RE have declined significantly. The Catholic life of the school has not been given its rightful prominence and the range and quality of the prayer life in the school has lessened.
- There is a lack of a shared vision for the distinctive nature of a Catholic school at the centre of any improvement planning or monitoring.
- Governors have not held school leaders to account in relation to the Catholic life of the school including RE. The governing body has too little impact on the direction and work of St Mary's and does not challenge the school to address weaknesses in these core areas.
- The governors have been successful in securing a substantive headteacher and deputy headteacher who will be tasked with driving the school forward in terms of developing its Catholic ethos. These key appointments should give the school the capacity to improve.
- No progress has been made on the issues identified for improvement in the last validation, which had included ensuring consistency across all year groups to ensure pupils are challenged in RE, along with reviewing the school mission statement, including it being embedded in the everyday life of the school. The school still needs to develop worship with children leading prayer in their own classrooms.
- Staff are committed to supporting the school and work purposefully in their drive for improvement, however, to date this has not included an adequate focus on improving outcomes 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:	236
Chair of Governors:	Carmen Tweed
Headteacher:	Penny Sherborne (Interim Headteacher) Lauren O'Connor (Substantive Headteacher from June 2019)

St. Mary's is a primary school serving the parish of Gosport, Bridgemary and Lee on Solent. It is situated near the centre of Gosport in a residential area. There are 236 pupils on roll, of whom 38% are Catholic and 21% from other Christian traditions. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is 18%. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is 14%. Pupils with English as another language (EAL) account for 22%, which is in-line with the national average.

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:	Louise Buxton
Assistant Validator:	Maggie Sanderson

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 interim headteacher, newly appointed substantive headteacher, RE leader, staff, governors, 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.