

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



**INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL
CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

**ST PETER'S VOLUNTARY AIDED
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**
Prospect Road, Marlow, SL7 2PJ

DfS School No: 825/3371

URN: 110473

Head Teacher: Miss A McCluskey

Chair of Governors: Mr M Jackson

Reporting Inspector: Mrs K Edwards

Associate Inspector: Mrs K Yuen

Date of Inspection: 28 June 2018

Date Report Issued: 13 July 2018

Date of previous

Inspection: 29 January 2013

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and
in partnership with Buckinghamshire Local Authority

Information about the school

St Peter's Catholic School is a one form entry primary school situated in Marlow, Buckinghamshire. There are 195 pupils on roll, 108 of whom are Catholic with the remainder coming from a diverse range of Christian and other faith backgrounds. 40 pupils have English as an additional language, 17 of whom are new English speakers. There are 23 pupils with Special Educational Needs including four with Education Care Health Plans. There are 12 members of teaching staff, 7 of whom are Catholic. The school is a member of the Buckinghamshire Catholic Schools Partnership.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

St Peter's is a good Catholic school where pupils benefit from the dedicated leadership and commitment of the headteacher and her staff and the shared vision and support of the Governing Body. Pupils are confident and enthusiastic in learning about their faith and the school provides a safe and nurturing environment in which to do so. Collective worship has a central place in the life of the school and there are strong links with the local parish. Pupils appreciate the opportunities given to them to develop spiritually and morally and have an impressive awareness of what it means to belong and contribute to the school and wider community. They are proud to belong to St Peter's.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 2

Since the last inspection the SLT have developed their understanding of the new assessment criteria for religious education and have worked in close partnership with the Buckinghamshire Catholic Schools Partnership to benchmark and moderate pupils' work. This collaborative approach has enabled them to lead staff in a better understanding of standards and expectations. Inspectors saw several examples of differentiated activities and how teachers ask challenging questions to get pupils to think in a rigorous way. The presentation of work is improving with pupils producing a variety of age-appropriate responses in terms of quantity and quality.

The SEF-RE gives a good reflection of where the school is and the inspectors agreed that there was ample evidence to validate the school's judgements. Further development of impact statements linked to key evidence would enhance this evaluation. It is clear that the SLT and governors have a good understanding of the school's areas for development and a good grasp of what will make a difference.

The SLT and governors share a strong vision for the further development of the Catholic nature of the school and for the improvement in attainment in religious education. Leaders in the school are highly dedicated to doing the best for the pupils in their care. A real strength is the collaborative work with the other Catholic schools in Buckinghamshire which enables the sharing of good and outstanding practice.

Leaders have a strong commitment to improvement and the humility to learn from others, thus the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve progress and standards in religious education through more rigorous and consistent formative marking and summative assessment
 - ensure that teacher expectation of the quality of written outcomes is fully consistent across the school
 - develop further links with all parishes in the Deanery, not just St Peter's itself
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Outcomes for pupils

Grade 2

Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their experiences of belonging to the Catholic community of St Peter's. They understood the mission statement and were able to talk about how it was 'alive' in their school. Pupils were also able to give many examples of opportunities taken to live out the mission statement through their relationships with other children, staff and the wider community. There was a clear understanding of the expectations of the school and a great willingness to take responsibility for caring for each other and the environment. Older pupils spoke about themselves as role models for younger pupils and all pupils appreciated the buddy system which was seen as mutually beneficial. They appreciate the opportunities given to contribute to school and wider community through the prefect system. 'Community Cops', the eco council, fundraising for CAFOD and visits to St Aubrey Wood House were a few examples of these activities.

Pupils spoke of their enjoyment of daily prayer and worship. They appreciated attending St Peter's Church for class masses and were looking forward to whole school Mass to celebrate their feast day. In class assemblies witnessed by the inspectors, pupils engaged with enthusiasm and reverence. They took the opportunities offered to reflect on how they could relate the message of the Gospel to their own lives and personal experiences. They spoke about the experience of writing and sharing their own prayers and taking different responsibilities for the celebration of Mass and other liturgies in the school. The school system of 'worship monitors' enables pupils to take further responsibility for collective worship and the school choir supports liturgical worship in the school and in the wider community, for example the 'Praise in the Park' event with other schools in Marlow.

Pupils benefit from the chaplaincy provision in the school to which all staff are expected to contribute. They were appreciative of the parish priest's contribution to this and particularly enjoyed his contribution to religious education lessons. Pupils are made to feel safe and supported by the school through provisions such as 'worry boxes', 'Rainbows' and lunch club. Those being prepared this year for their First Holy Communion were appreciative that their sacramental preparation was led by the headteacher in an after-school club.

Pupils engage enthusiastically in their religious education lessons, demonstrated by their willingness to participate in discussion and tackle challenging questions. They posed their own questions and listened attentively and respectfully to others' ideas and viewpoints. A key strength in terms of pupil response was how they naturally applied what was being taught to their own lives and experiences and were able to reflect on this confidently with others. Pupils applied prior knowledge and understanding well in the classroom and many demonstrated good biblical knowledge. Generally, they were well focused, engaged and collaborated well with others. The school recognises, however, that attainment in religious education is not yet high enough. This is evidenced in outcomes in some of the pupils' books.

Leaders and managers

Grade 2

The governors play an active role in monitoring and evaluating the Catholic life of the school and each governor is linked to a class which they visit termly. The link governor for religious education undertakes learning walks and formalises his observations in a report to fellow governors. This liaison enables governors to form a clear picture of areas in need of improvement and to work in a supportive but challenging way with the headteacher and SLT. Opportunities to re-visit the mission and vision of the school plus 'SWOT' analysis by the staff and governors form the context for the school development plan. The headteacher ensures that the Catholic life of the school is a regular agenda item at SLT and staff meetings which supports the dissemination of ideas and enhances the sense of collective responsibility across the school.

The link governor for religious education spoke highly of his experience of collective worship in the school and the strong connection with the parish of St Peter.

The headteacher is also the lead teacher for religious education. She has a detailed picture of current staff performance and training and development needs. She spoke appreciatively of the mutually supportive relationship with other Catholic schools in Buckinghamshire as collaboratively new Diocesan assessment criteria are developed and implemented. She recognises the need to develop further benchmarking, moderation and marking in religious education. Regular, formal observations and informal visits to share good and outstanding practice are recognised as crucial in developing the quality of teaching still further.

Provision

Grade 2

The school under the leadership of the headteacher has developed an assembly programme which is well resourced, imaginative and well targeted to meet the spiritual needs of the community. There is a wealth of opportunity provided for prayer in the school and creative resources have been developed to celebrate different events in the liturgical year. The inspectors felt, however, that some of the prayer corners lost impact and focus within the classrooms' other displays, and that this needed to be improved. School and class masses are celebrated regularly and parents and governors made especially welcome. The community benefits especially from the support of the local parish priest who together with the SLT and the PSHCE leader forms the chaplaincy team. Parents receive regular information about prayer and collective worship at school and materials to enable parents to pray with their children at home are made available to new families and at the beginning of each key stage. Pastoral provision for the most vulnerable children and families is outstanding and is based on the careful building of trust between home and school and well targeted support from a variety of resources from within the school and outside agencies. The acting deputy headteacher, who is also the SENCO, plays a key role in the highly effective leadership of this provision.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In the best practice seen, teachers enabled pupils to think rigorously through challenging questions and effective interventions. Overall expectations of quality outcomes from pupils were high and teacher subject knowledge was good. Some good examples of differentiation were seen, but this needs further development in some lesson planning. A greater strength of the teaching was the opportunities given for pupils to relate activities and learning to their own personal experience and faith journey. The opportunity for role-play and for pupils to imagine themselves in 'someone else's shoes' was seen in several lessons and had a powerful impact on progress. Best practice in marking celebrated pupils' thinking, developed subject literacy, and moved them on by posing further challenging questions which pupils were expected to answer. However, this formative approach was not consistent in all years.

The learning objectives of 'Come and See' are met in the schemes of work and 10% of teaching time is given to religious education, meeting diocesan guidelines. There was good evidence of teaching about other world faiths in all books and Year 6 have the opportunity to choose a world faith for further independent study. Book scrutiny, displays, lesson observation and talking to pupils gave very good evidence of the commitment of St Peter's to pupils' spiritual and moral development as they explore what it means to be a child of God, belonging to a Catholic community.

The inspectors would like to thank all members of the school community for the warm welcome and hospitality extended during their visit.
