



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

ST ANTHONY'S VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Farnham Road, Farnham Royal, SL2 3AA

URN. 110040

Acting Head Teacher: Mrs D Rainer
Chair of Governors: Mrs F Gough

Inspector: Mrs P Brannigan
Associate Inspector: Mrs R Jones

Date of Inspection: 7 March 2018

Date Report Issued: 26 March 2018

Date of previous Inspection: 24 April 2012

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

Information about the school

St Anthony's is a three form entry primary school with nursery in Slough, Buckinghamshire and part of the St Peter Catholic Academy Trust. It is also part of the Slough Catholic Schools partnership. The school serves the parishes of St Anthony and Divine Mercy Polish Church. There are currently 576 pupils aged 3-11 on roll. About 60% of these are of Polish heritage with the rest coming from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Almost 80% of pupils have English as an additional language, considerably above the national average. Around 74% of pupils are Catholics with the remainder coming from other Christian denominations or other faiths. Over 55% of the teachers and teaching assistants are Catholics. The proportion of pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium Funding is 12% which is below the national average. Since the retirement of the previous headteacher an experienced interim team leads the school.

Key grades for inspection

1. Outstanding
2. Good
3. Requires improvement
4. Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Anthony's is an outstanding school with a Catholic ethos which is evident in all aspects of its life. Prayer and worship are central to its work and pupils are given outstanding opportunities for spiritual and moral development through the curriculum and wider life of the school. Religious education is good with effective support offered to new teachers. Pupils' standards of attainment are also good. Academy committee members know the school well and are able to offer a good level of challenge and support. Pastoral care and chaplaincy are very good and pupils know where to go when they need help. Relationships within the school and with the parishes are excellent and pupils feel well cared for and supported in their learning. Parents are very happy with the standard of religious education, the good level of communication and the way the school supports their children's faith journey.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 2

The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement. The interim headteacher and her team are well placed to take the school forward. The areas for development identified in the last inspection in 2012 have been addressed and the self-evaluation of the religious life of the school is now included in the overall cycle. The effectiveness of the provision of the Catholic life of the school is monitored through discussions, pupils' questionnaires and interviews. There has also been an investment in resources for religious education which has led to good outcomes for all pupils. A monitoring system is in place which enables leadership to identify areas for development. Teaching is good and appropriate for pupils' needs. A recently established 'Mini Vinnies' group is giving pupils additional opportunities for involvement in the Catholic life of the school. School leadership gives a high profile to religious education and has put in place strategies to share good practice and support new teachers. The religious education curriculum is well planned and enables pupils to make connections between faith and their own lives.

The interim senior leadership team and academy committee members have a clear vision for the Catholicity of the school and the central place of prayer, worship and religious education. Senior staff are good role models and all teachers are encouraged to improve their skills through training and attending diocesan courses. Moderation of pupils' work with other schools in the trust is leading to a good understanding of assessment by all staff. The school's self-evaluation documentation fully reflects the Catholic life of the school.

The current leadership has a very good capacity to maintain effectiveness. The interim headteacher is well supported by senior leadership including the head of Catholic life, the religious education subject leader and the Trust chaplain. The link academy committee member for religious education plays an active role in the life of the school and is a frequent visitor.

What the school should do to improve further:

- continue to implement actions identified in the religious education action plan
- continue to share good practice with new staff to enable more outstanding teaching to take place
- ensure all staff have high expectations of presentation in religious education workbooks and share these expectations with pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They respond well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. Elected school council members, faith ambassadors and Eco-warriors all play an active part in school life, helping to care for the physical environment as well as supporting younger pupils at playtimes. In addition, a 'Rights Respecting' group promotes the UNICEF agenda and makes links between the articles and the school curriculum. Several local and national charities are supported through the year including Cafod, MacMillan Cancer Care, Wateraid and Slough Homeless. Pupils welcome opportunities to help others and spoke enthusiastically of serving a meal to senior citizens every month as well as donating harvest gifts to families in need. There are excellent links with St Anthony's parish with school premises being used for sacramental preparation. Pupils show respect for adults and each other. Behaviour is very good and pupils value the sense of security, friendship and community created within the school.

Prayer and worship are at the heart of school life. Pupils are given opportunities to plan and lead class prayer times as well as school assemblies. At whole school Masses each class takes it in turn to lead the welcome, read, compose bidding prayers, act as altar servers and bring up the offertory. Pupils can spend time in the prayer garden and learn the importance of stillness through guided meditation. They can talk about bible stories and have a good grasp of religious terminology appropriate to their ages. Pupils learn the traditional prayers of the church as well as writing their own, many of which were seen during the inspection. They are able to apply aspects of Jesus' teaching to their own lives. On the day of the inspection, assemblies, one for each key stage, focused on the Eucharist and the way Jesus is with us all the time. Aspects of recent learning were included and pupils were attentive and responsive. A gospel reading and the school prayer were included and singing was excellent. Pupils in Years 2, 4 and 6 have an annual retreat day in the parish church where they are joined by parents and carers at the end for praise and celebration. Year 6 pupils have a four-day residential retreat where they follow a programme on the theme 'Challenge and Change.' The recently established 'Mini Vinnies' group is supported by the trust chaplain and includes pupils from all faiths represented in the school community.

Chaplaincy is very good with a designated chaplain who is shared with all three schools in the trust. She is available to staff and pupils on a weekly basis and occasionally leads collective worship and guided meditation. Pastoral care is shared with all staff who work closely together to promote the spiritual and moral development of pupils who feel safe, cared for and know how to access help. Extra support is available for pupils who need it and bereaved children can visit the memory garden either alone or with a member of staff. Pupils spoken to said they valued being in a friendly school where they are listened to and encouraged to help each other. Parents are positive about the care given to their children and appreciate the provision of breakfast and after school clubs.

Progress and attainment in religious education are good. Pupils work with interest and enjoyment. They say they like religious education lessons and work well together. They are eager to participate in activities and keen to do well. They have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and abilities. Lessons observed were well planned with a range of cross curricular activities including role play and literacy. Data analysis confirms that progress is good for all groups. Behaviour for learning is excellent and attainment is in line with diocesan expectations. Workbooks show progress, coverage of the curriculum and indicate a varied range of tasks. However, standards of presentation vary and some books are untidy.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

The interim headteacher and her team demonstrate outstanding leadership of the school through the way they promote the provision for its Catholic life. Recently the structure of the senior leadership team has been distributed across senior and middle leaders with the view of creating a wider spectrum of support and sustainability across the school. The interim headteacher communicates a clear Catholic vision to the whole community and is supported in this by staff and academy committee members who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for pupils. The subject leader produces a carefully focused action plan each year which is monitored regularly. Religious education is monitored through staff meetings, data analysis, learning walks, workbook scrutiny and observation of teaching. The school has put in place a system to enable progress in religious education to be tracked more accurately. Moderation of pupils' work is shared with other schools in the trust as well as internally. Leaders are committed to staff development and teachers are encouraged to undertake further training. Nine teachers have the CCRS qualification.

Local academy committee members have a good understanding of outcomes and provision through visits to the school, the interim headteacher's reports and meetings with subject leaders. Reports for the trust include a section on the Catholic life of the school and the committee member linked to religious education visits regularly, attends assemblies and is well placed to evaluate pupils' experience of prayer and worship. Trust members access training provided by the diocese which enables them to evaluate all aspects of the religious life of the school and to challenge and support effectively.

School leaders ensure that St Anthony's is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. Parish links are excellent and parishioners are invited to many school celebrations. School events are included in the church newsletter and there are several joint school/parish activities throughout the year. Other faiths are taught well through the 'Come and See' religious education programme and religious diversity among the school community is acknowledged and celebrated. Visits are made to a Hindu temple and local mosque and a 'Places of Worship' topic in Year 4 also contributes to pupils' understanding and appreciation of their community. Pupils are given opportunities to develop a sense of service through supporting a range of charities. This is enabling them to understand Catholic values with Christ at the centre of all they do. The school participates in local events and there are good links with other schools especially those in the trust. Parents are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress through regular meetings as well as curriculum information letters, the website and copies of the 'Wednesday Word.' Prayer bags which help parents to support their children's faith journey are sent home on a rota basis. School staff are supported by the provision of a workplace nursery.

Provision

Grade 1

Provision for prayer, worship and chaplaincy at St Anthony's is outstanding. Collective worship and liturgies are central to the life of the school. They are well planned and contribute to pupils' spiritual development. They include visual presentations, bible readings, drama and music. Singing is excellent and was a strong feature of the assemblies seen on the day of the inspection. Pupils are involved in collective worship in their classrooms and are given opportunities to plan and lead liturgies. Each classroom has a prayer focus with religious artefacts and a display board which occasionally includes pupils' work. There are regular opportunities to visit the nearby church for prayer, Masses and the Stations of the Cross during Lent. The traditions of the Church including Marian devotions are explored and the heritage of Polish pupils is acknowledged with visits from the priests from the Divine Mercy Polish Church and a celebration of St Casimir.

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. During the inspection lessons observed were planned with clear learning intentions and an interesting range of activities. Differentiation enabled all pupils to make good progress. Pupils work with interest and said they enjoyed religious education lessons. Teachers respond well to pupils' comments and take opportunities to extend knowledge and develop understanding. Good support by teaching assistants is a feature of many lessons. Marking is positive and the best examples include suggestions of ways to improve. Resources are good and there are sufficient sets of bibles to ensure each class can have immediate access to scripture. There is evidence to suggest that current good standards are likely to be maintained or improved.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is very good. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education, 'Come and See' is embedded and enhanced by visits from organisations including Cafod. Pupils visit the Bernadine convent in Stroud where they learn about the lifestyle of nuns and their sense of vocation. Each class is named for a saint or righteous person and pupils learn about their lives and actions. Religious education displays around the school emphasise the centrality of faith to the life of the community. The curriculum enables pupils to become aware of their responsibility for each other and their environment. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development.

Trust members hope to appoint a substantive headteacher in the near future. In the meantime, the interim headteacher and her team ensure the stability of school leadership and enable the development of practice to further improve outcomes for pupils. The assessment procedures are being revised in line with diocesan recommendations and will be disseminated to all staff. There is every reason to expect provision in all areas to be maintained or further improved.

The inspectors would like to express their thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.