

DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH S48 VALIDATION REPORT



St Dominic Savio Catholic Primary School, Woodley

Western Ave, Woodley, Berkshire RG5 3BH

URN: 110041
Date of previous s48 validation 13 October 2014
Date of this s48 validation 19 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Previous s48 validation: Good
This s48 validation: Outstanding

The school community:	Outstanding	Attainment and progress in RE:	Outstanding
The wider community:	Outstanding	Quality of teaching in RE:	Outstanding
Spiritual development:	Outstanding	Leadership and management of RE:	Outstanding
Moral development:	Outstanding	Leadership and management:	Outstanding

This is an outstanding school.

- The school's mission statement, '*Serve the Lord with joy*' is firmly embedded in the life of the school, with all members of the community taking an active part in fully and joyfully living it out. All who enter the school are valued and welcomed.
- Excellent relationships between all members of this faith-filled community lead to a loving and trusting environment where all, adults and children, are encouraged and supported to achieve their full potential.
- The headteacher has a strong and ambitious vision for the school. This vision is known and actively supported by all in the community. Leaders at all levels are strongly committed to the Catholic mission of the school and to high standards for all pupils. The governing body, which both supports and challenges, is a key strength of the school.
- The school is very much a diocesan school. The school is recognised as a centre of good practice across the diocese and often hosts visits from other schools. There is a strong and mutually supportive partnership between the school and its feeder parishes.
- Religious education (RE) is central to the life of the school. The outstanding leadership of the RE leader, together with the strong support given by the headteacher, helps ensure teachers deliver high quality teaching, leading to outstanding progress and high standards in the subject.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and are positive about all aspects of school life, one commented, '*I cannot rate this school highly enough.*' another, '*This is an amazing school!*'.
- Both spiritual and moral development are outstanding. Pupils are provided with a wide range of spiritual opportunities which they value and embrace with enthusiasm. Pupils are outstanding ambassadors for the school and speak about their school with pride, '*The school is a safe place where everyone is valued and where we treat others as we want to be treated*'. Their outstanding behaviour and attitudes are underpinned by their knowledge and living out of the school's mission statement.
- Staff and children act as witnesses to their faith through their support of one another and their support for local, national and international charities, including CAFOD and the local foodbank. Pupils are able to link this reaching out to help those in need with relevant passages from scripture.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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

- Ensure planning in RE provides an appropriate balance of opportunities for pupils to both extend their knowledge and understanding of RE and to apply their learning in RE in a range of contexts. Where meaningful and relevant, consider linking this to Catholic social teaching.
- Embed in upper key stage 2 and then extend to all year groups the recent move to pupils planning and leading aspects of their own worship, ensuring expectations are appropriate for the age of the children involved.

Full Report

The school as a Catholic community

The school community:	Outstanding
The wider community:	Outstanding

- The mission statement, '*Serve the Lord with joy*' is central to the life of the school. The vision of a faith filled community striving to live out the values of the Gospel so all, regardless of starting point or background, can succeed is inspiring to all in the community.
- There is a true sense of welcome and inclusiveness in the school. The diverse community, with its wide range of cultural and faith backgrounds, is valued for the richness it brings to the community and is seen as an opportunity to be embraced, to demonstrate how God loves and welcomes everyone. Excellent relationships exist between all groups in the school.
- When new members join the community of St Dominic Savio, they are given a comprehensive induction into its ethos and high expectations so all can quickly find their place and feel part of the school. Both adults and pupils are well supported by their peers when they initially join the school.
- The Catholic ethos is strongly evident within the school environment with many signs and artefacts that clearly demonstrate you are in a community of faith. Particularly striking features are the recently improved prayer courtyard and the many high quality spiritually focussed displays, which all contribute to an attractive and purposeful community of learning.
- St Dominic Savio Primary School sees itself very much as part of the wider Catholic community. Although it serves three parishes, it strives to ensure all feel part of the wider school community. The support of the local parish priest is warmly welcomed and acknowledged by the staff of the school. It is very much a diocesan school, being one of the first to volunteer or to offer support and is always represented at diocesan wide events. Both the headteacher and RE leader have taken on supportive roles on behalf of the diocese. The school is often used by the diocese as somewhere to send others to observe good practice.
- Parents hold the school in very high regard, one parent commented, '*I have always been made to feel comfortable and welcomed by all at St Dominic Savio*'.
- There are very good systems of communication, ensuring stakeholders are well-informed and regularly updated. The newsletter and website reflect the Catholic life of the school. A key feature is the school's twitter account which is often used to share and celebrate events linked to its ethos and is an innovative way to reach a wider audience.

Curriculum religious education

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

- The evidence in pupils' books, the consistently good or better quality of teaching, the high end of year outcomes and discussions with pupils all combine to show that attainment and progress in RE are outstanding.
- Pupils value RE and recognise that it can help them in their daily lives, one pupil talked about how '*every time you forgive or repent you get one step closer to God*' others talked about the importance of the Gospel values and how these link to their *Golden Rules*.
- On the day of the visit, all classes were being taught about other world faiths, a key component of the diocesan RE scheme. Throughout the school, children were engaged, interested and quick to demonstrate their very good subject knowledge and religious vocabulary. Contributions from members of the faiths being studied enhanced the learning.
- Very good learning behaviours were evident. Lessons were engaging and clearly focussed on key skills in religious education. Learning is supported by well-organised environments, well-chosen resources and targeted support from teaching assistants.
- Part of the day was spent reviewing the work in the pupils' RE books, this included books from the previous year. Progression across the school is very evident as is the variety of tasks the children are given and the obvious pride the children take in their work. Learning is clearly based around scripture and Catholic beliefs, practices and traditions. There was also evidence, in the books and from observations, that staff are open and happy to share aspects of their own faith with the children. Very

occasionally activities do not always best support the learning journey or the learning is not moved on quickly enough.

- Pupils' subject knowledge is very strong; this is well-supported by knowledge organisers for each unit of work. Currently, there is a slight imbalance between the two strands of RE – learning about RE and learning from RE – with the latter not always being given sufficient focus. Moving forward, the school needs to ensure planning in RE provides an appropriate balance of opportunities for pupils to both extend their knowledge and understanding of RE and to apply their learning in RE in a range of contexts. Where meaningful and relevant, consider linking this to Catholic social teaching.
- The RE leader's expertise, ambition and drive for the subject has helped steer the school to the very high outcomes seen during the inspection. Staff spoken to were very strong in their appreciation for her support and guidance. All in leadership roles, including governors, recognise the importance of RE and share the RE leader's passion in seeking the highest quality of RE for the pupils in the school.
- The school has recently moved from a high maintenance form of summative assessment in RE to a less time-consuming approach which is more in line with the recommended diocesan model. With a few minor refinements this should prove a useful tool in moving individual pupil's learning forward and in tracking progress in RE across the school.

Spiritual and moral development

Spiritual development:

Outstanding

Moral development:

Outstanding

- A governor remarked how the school is '*deeply spiritual*' - all evidence and observations from the inspection demonstrated how apt is this description of the school. The spiritual life of the school can also be summed up by the mission statement, '*Serve the Lord with joy*'.
- Throughout the school there is clear evidence of the central role of prayer in the life of the school. This includes, inspirational scriptural quotes, high quality prayer areas in each classroom, a prayer courtyard (which was used recently to pray the Rosary), and the *Sanctus Locus*, a centrally located quiet prayer area that children can and do use at lunchtime for some quiet reflection.
- During the visit two worships were observed, one a whole school liturgy, led by the headteacher, and the second a Year 3 class worship, led by a Year 6 group. In both, a reverent and spiritual atmosphere was created, those participating were encouraged to reflect on scripture and a clear message was communicated for them to take away and put into action.
- The move to pupils leading and planning their worship, and being more spontaneous in their response to prayer, is a relatively new initiative for the school. Currently, this is being embedded into the upper key stage 2 classes, once this is complete the next step is to cascade it down through the school. This is something to be strongly encouraged. The older pupils spoken to clearly enjoy and value these opportunities.
- There is a wide variety of liturgical celebrations across the year, these are often linked to the liturgical year. Children talked about the current focus on Remembrance and pointed out the Remembrance Tree, they also recalled the Mary Procession and penitential services.
- The school has also established prayerful links between home and school, both early years classes have a 'prayer bear' which they can take home, and in Advent other classes will have the opportunity to receive a visit from a *Posada*. Each school newsletter ends with a prayer or reflection.
- 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 *Golden Rules* based on Matthew 7:12.
- Children talked about how the school is '*a safe place where they are valued*'.
- The rich multi-faith and multi-culture aspect of the school is used well to talk about and encourage a culture of respect and tolerance for all.
- When discussing reaching out to those in need, one pupil commented, '*God does not want anyone to go hungry, so that's why we should help*', clearly linking the moral purpose for helping others with their faith. Children demonstrated they have an innate, if simple, understanding of the principles of Catholic social teaching, however at the moment they do not have sufficient knowledge or the specific vocabulary to fully engage with these key principles of why and how we should put our faith into action.

- The school is currently reviewing its approach to Relationships Education ahead of its statutory implementation from September 2020. The intention to base their approach on the Ten Ten resource, *'Life to the Full'* is one we fully support.

Leadership and management:

Outstanding

- All those in leadership roles, led by the outstanding example of the headteacher, have a shared vision and passion to ensure St Dominic Savio Primary School is a place where all feel welcome, valued and where every pupil *'regardless of birth or background'* will be successful. This within a faith-filled community with Christ very much at the centre.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for development and hold the leadership to account in relation to its Catholic ethos and RE, however, this could be better reflected in the minutes of their meetings.
- The school has a robust approach to self-review. Very good progress has been made since the school's last s48 validation and the areas for development have been successfully addressed.

School details

Name of school St Dominic Savio Catholic Primary School

Age range of pupils: 4 – 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

Number of pupils on roll: 416

Chair of Governors: John McKendrick

Headteacher: James Broadbridge

St Dominic Savio is a two-form entry school situated on the outskirts of Reading, in Woodley. The school mainly serves the parishes of St John Bosco, Woodley, Our Lady of Peace and Blessed Dominic Barberi, Earley and St Thomas More, Twyford. Just under half of the pupils are Catholic. Approximately a quarter of pupils are of another faith. The percentage of pupils which have English as an additional language has increased since the last s48 validation. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below 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

Robert Dare Lead Validator

Jeff Sendall Assistant Validator

Activities carried out as part of the validation

- 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 RE leader.
- Pupil work scrutiny.
- Feedback of key findings.

Conclusion

The validators would like to thank the headteacher, assistant headteachers, RE leader, staff, governors, the parish priest, parents and pupils of St Dominic Savio 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.