

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



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

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

**ST ETHELBERT'S VOLUNTARY AIDED  
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
Wexham Road, Slough, SL2 5QR

DfE School No: 871/3363

URN: 143802

Headteacher: Mrs F Maynard

Academy Committee Chair: Mrs M Dickinson

Reporting Inspector: Mrs P Brannigan

Associate Inspector: Mrs M Shinkwin

**Date of Inspection: 22 March 2019**

Date Report Issued: 9 April 2019

Date of previous Inspection: 26 June 2013

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese  
and is part of the St Peter's Academy Trust

### **Information about the school**

St Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School and Nursery is situated in Slough, Berkshire and is part of the Diocese of Northampton. The school serves the parishes of the Church of the Holy Redeemer and St Ethelbert's, both in Slough. The school is two-form entry with 402 pupils aged 3-11 on roll. Pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds with 70% speaking English as an additional language. Almost 69% of pupils are Catholics with the remainder coming from other Christian denominations, other faiths or none. 44% of the teachers are Catholics and two have the CCRS or similar qualification. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is around the national average. The school is part of the St Peter Catholic Academy trust. Since the last inspection in 2013 there has been an almost complete change of staff including a new senior leadership team.

### **Key grades for inspection**

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

### **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

**Grade 2**

St Ethelbert's is a good school with outstanding Catholic life and collective worship. Strong and effective leadership at all levels gives a clear sense of purpose and direction to the Catholic life of the school which is shared by all staff and academy committee members. Prayer and collective worship are an integral part of the school's daily life and central to the spiritual and moral development of pupils. They have a sense of belonging to a community where helping and supporting each other is part of their faith journey. Outcomes for pupils are good with provision for all abilities and needs. Members of the senior leadership team offer very good support to new and less experienced teachers which has led to good levels of attainment. Pupils say they enjoy school and appreciate the many opportunities given to be involved in its life.

### **The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**Grade 1**

The school has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement. The last inspection in 2013 identified areas for development linked to raising standards of teaching and learning in religious education, improving the standard of assessment and ensuring the mission statement is embedded in the life of the school. These areas have been well addressed and are constantly under review.

The school's self-evaluation documentation is accurate and includes evidence to support judgements. The school development plan identifies the need to ensure that the teaching of religious education is good or outstanding in every year group and includes the actions which need to be taken to ensure this happens.

The headteacher is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education and shares her vision with the whole community. Along with the chaplain, subject leader and academy committee members, she ensures the school's mission statement, 'Learning, achieving and growing together with Jesus,' is well known by pupils and regularly reviewed with all stakeholders.

School leaders have an excellent capacity to maintain effectiveness and put in place further improvements. They constantly review areas for development and implement appropriate actions.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

As identified in the religious education action plan:

- Continue to make provision for staff development to enable outstanding teaching to occur in every year group.
- Give pupils more opportunities to plan and lead worship.
- Continue to develop outdoor spaces for spontaneous prayer.

## **Catholic Life**

## **Grade 1**

At St Ethelbert's, pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school to a very great extent. They have an excellent understanding of the mission statement which is included in prayers. They are given many opportunities to take on responsibilities to develop the Catholic character of the school through membership of the school council, chaplaincy team and eco group. Pupils spoken to have a strong sense of belonging to a Catholic community and value the ethos of the school and the many opportunities they have to contribute to its Catholic life through service to the school and care for the environment. They understand that all pupils share responsibility for caring for each other and can link this to Christ's command to 'Love one another as I have loved you'. Pupils are also given opportunities to help the wider community through providing a Christmas tea party for parishioners and raising money for charities. These have included Slough food bank and Cafod. Pupils of other faiths and none are included in all celebrations and there are good links with a local Baptist church.

Provision for the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The school's mission statement and values underpin the behaviour of all members of the community. A wide range of assemblies and collective worship are part of the school's provision where key celebrations in the Church's liturgical year enable pupils to develop their faith journey. A 'theme of the week' inspired by Sunday's gospel is produced by the chaplain along with a short reflection which is shared with parents. There is a weekly lunchtime prayer club which is well attended. Pupils are given opportunities to understand global issues including climate change and the importance of recycling. They frequently visit the adjacent church for Mass, to learn about the sacraments and explore aspects of Catholic worship. All staff promote high standards of behaviour and are excellent role models for pupils. Pastoral care includes meeting the needs of staff as well as pupils and families. The safeguarding and pupil well-being officer, a family support and welfare adviser, chaplain and senior leadership meet regularly to ensure all vulnerable pupils and families are cared for. Parish links are excellent with many joint celebrations and fundraising activities.

Leaders and academy committee members are most effective in promoting the Catholic life of the school. This is demonstrated by the way self-evaluation is explicitly focused on Catholic life and the aim to enhance current provision. Leaders monitor and evaluate provision and outcomes in order to plan future improvements. Continuous professional development is offered to all staff and is engaging, well planned and effective. The subject leader attends diocesan courses linked to the new religious education framework and assessment. She provides a model of good practice by demonstration lessons for teachers new to Catholic education and, along with the chaplain, offers support in planning and assessment. She also uses 'pupil voice' questionnaires to gauge understanding of spiritual and moral development. Academy committee members make a highly significant contribution to Catholic life by their commitment and involvement in school activities. They regularly attend collective worship and whole school services and also discuss religious education at every full committee meeting. The local parish priest demonstrates a high level of commitment to the school by frequent visits, involving pupils in mass celebrations and acting as an additional teaching resource.

## **Religious Education**

## **Grade 2**

Religious education at St Ethelbert's is good and improving. Pupils achieve well and enjoy their lessons. They make good progress and behaviour for learning is excellent. Pupils are given a good foundation in Early Years which is built upon as they progress through the school. In lessons, pupils are actively engaged and keen to contribute to discussions. They enjoy a range of activities including art, drama, music and discussions and say they like religious education. They have an understanding of what it means to be a Christian as well as a knowledge of other faiths. Workbooks are well presented and show coverage of the curriculum and a range of activities. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards in religious education meet diocesan expectations.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in religious education is good. Teachers have high expectations and adapt their teaching style to meet the needs of their classes. This ensures all pupils are fully engaged. Lessons observed during the inspections were at least good, some with outstanding features. Tasks and support are differentiated to enable all pupils to achieve well. There are strong cross-curricular links particularly between English and religious education. Good quality resources including class sets of bibles are used effectively to engage interest and enable pupils to become familiar with scripture. The school's 'Learning powers' make clear the links between scripture and everyday life. Marking and constructive feedback points the way to further improvement and leads to a high level of engagement. Teachers new to Catholic education are well supported and encouraged to undertake further training. Five are about to embark on the CCRS course. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support individuals and groups of pupils. The headteacher and subject leader are currently revising the assessment process to embed the new age related standards in line with diocesan guidelines. They are also engaged in developing moderation of pupils' work across the academy to ensure consistency in judgements.

School leaders and academy committee members are strongly committed to religious education. They ensure the curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishop's Conference with at least 10% of curriculum time devoted to the subject. The religious education curriculum is delivered through the 'Come and See' programme and is enhanced by the 'Journey in Love' scheme. The headteacher along with senior leadership ensure that religious education and the Catholic life of the school are central to self-evaluation. Religious education has full parity with other core curriculum subjects and includes provision for professional development and resourcing. The rigorous system for monitoring and evaluation is leading to good outcomes for all pupils. The subject leader tracks the progress of each year group and a system to track individuals and groups is being developed. Academy committee members visit frequently and the whole body is aware of developments in religious education and use monitoring data for planning.

### **Collective Worship**

### **Grade 1**

Collective worship at St Ethelbert's is outstanding. It occurs through the week and includes the Monday gospel assembly led by school leadership, class-based liturgies which include pupils' own prayers and a Friday celebration assembly where the headteacher is joined by the chaplain. Each class has a prayer focus which often includes pupils' reflections. At Mass pupils act as welcomers, altar servers, readers, compose prayers and sing. The Church's liturgical year is celebrated through whole school acts of worship to which parents are invited. Traditional devotions including the Rosary in May and October and the Stations of the Cross in Lent are familiar to pupils. Members of the chaplaincy team are taking increasing responsibility for the preparation of Masses and whole school celebrations. However, pupils across the school would welcome further opportunities to plan and lead liturgies.

Collective worship at St Ethelbert's is central to the life of the school and prayer is included in every celebration. Staff have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year which is reflected in assemblies and in classroom display boards. They are confident in leading morning prayer and key stage assemblies. Responses during a whole school assembly showed pupils had a clear understanding of the relevance of scripture to their own lives. They showed interest, concentration and sang very well. Services of reconciliation are part of collective worship during Advent and Lent. Masses and other celebrations are often attended by academy committee members and parishioners.

Leaders and academy committee members promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship by giving a high priority to the planning of quality liturgies and assemblies. They ensure all staff are given guidance on liturgical formation and the delivery of collective worship. Leaders are visible and committed role models for the whole school and have an extensive understanding of the Church's liturgical year with its seasons and feasts. School

leaders and academy committee members, including the local parish priest, regularly review collective worship as part of their self-evaluation processes.

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