

# Catholic Diocese of Northampton



## Inspection Report of Denominational Character and Religious Education

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

### **ST EDWARD'S VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Hazell Avenue, Aylesbury, HP21 7JF

DfE School No: 825/3367

URN: 110475

Head Teacher: Mrs A Majcher

Chair of Governors: Mr M Lowry

Reporting Inspector: Mr J Flanagan

Associate Inspector: Mrs P Brannigan

**Date of Inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> June 2011**

Date Report Issued: 7<sup>th</sup> July 2011

Date of previous Inspection: 8<sup>th</sup> May 2008

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

## **Information about the school**

St Edward's Catholic Junior School is a two-form entry school serving several parishes in Aylesbury. There are 233 children on roll of whom almost 80% are baptised Catholics. Three quarters of the children come from White British or other white backgrounds. The number of children who speak English as an additional language is well above average. The number of pupils having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. There are 8 full time teachers, of whom 5 are Catholic, and 5 part-time teachers. There are 9 support staff.

## **Key grades for inspection**

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Satisfactory 4: Unsatisfactory

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

**Grade 1**

St Edward's is an outstanding Catholic school. The mission statement is at the heart of the school and underpins every aspect of the school's life. Leadership at all levels is outstanding and school leaders inspire a spiritual purpose throughout the school. Prayer and worship are vibrant aspects of the school and chaplaincy is strong. Children are happy and proud of their school and the quality of relationships throughout the school is very good. The children's spiritual and moral progress is outstanding. Teaching is good and at times outstanding and attainment in RE is good.

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

**Grade 1**

Outstanding progress has been made in tackling the issues raised at the last inspection. A thorough policy to monitor learning and teaching is being effectively employed. Assessment procedures now make a significant contribution to planning for pupil progress. Chaplaincy is well co-ordinated and plays a major part in the life of the school.

Self-evaluation is very detailed and accurate. Many members of the school community are encouraged to contribute to the process and, as a result, share in judgements being made. Leaders are very open to suggestions for making their self-evaluation more effective so that the school can provide an ever improving experience for its members.

The head teacher, senior leadership team and governors share a passion and a vision for the school. They care deeply about the school and want the very best for the pupils in their care and are able to articulate their plans for the future.

The current leadership and management teams have an outstanding capacity to develop even further this very happy and successful school.

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

- develop further monitoring procedures for all aspects of the Catholic life of the school
- continue the monitoring of learning and teaching to ensure high standards are maintained and improved.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

**Grade 1**

The pupils at St Edward's make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school. They display a deep and sincere understanding of the Catholic character of the school, which they value. They are able to speak confidently about their responsibilities and how they have initiated developments such as the sensory garden. Learning ambassadors are proud of the support they provide for other

pupils and the members of the liturgy team have a very sound knowledge of their work in supporting worship in school. Peer mediators make a very significant contribution to the outstanding standards of playground behaviour. The pupils are a great strength of the school and this is because much is expected of them and they are given excellent opportunities and support to develop their talents.

Collective worship and prayer are at the heart of the school. Singing and the responses in assembly are outstanding. Children are able to describe with deep understanding the wide variety of worship in the school. Prayer is recognised by the pupils as an integral part of school life and outstanding examples of their own prayers are to be found in class prayer books and on display. Pupils play a very active part in preparing and leading liturgies. Inspectors found outstanding evidence of their reverence during worship on a very recent residential visit.

Children greatly value the range of chaplaincy based activities in the school. They are very aware of their role within these activities and make an outstanding contribution to them. They know how to access the provision should the need arise and they talk enthusiastically of how they are valued by the adults in the school. The chaplaincy provision makes a powerful contribution to the lives of the pupils.

Children make good progress in RE and some examples of outstanding work are in evidence. The great majority display an enthusiasm for RE and enjoy the lessons. Examples of good progress being made were observed during the inspection. Pupils' oral responses are good as is their behaviour during lessons. Written work is undertaken with care and thought. Children are keen to do their best. Attainment levels at the end of Key Stage 2 are good.

## **Leaders and Managers**

## **Grade 1**

The promotion of the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The head teacher and senior leadership are deeply committed to the school and all its members. There is a clear shared vision for the school and the mission statement is lived out by all members of the school community. The desire to provide the children with the very best is clear in all that is done. Detailed and accurate self-evaluation is undertaken and forms the basis for clearly identified school development planning, though at times the self-evaluation concentrates on what is done in school and not on the impact of what is done. The energy and resources that are spent on promoting the Catholic life of the school are reflected in the children's active and enthusiastic approach to their school.

There is a rigorously planned system for the monitoring of the provision of RE in the school. Lessons are observed on a regular basis and valuable feedback is given and recorded. High expectations for the standards of teaching form part of the school development plan. The RE Co-ordinator is outstanding in her leadership of the subject providing very clear direction and well informed support.

The chair of governors is passionate about the school. The governors are well organised and make a significant contribution to the direction of the school. They have established procedures for gathering information from all members of the school community and this enables them to make informed decisions for the good of the school and to challenge school managers with whom they work well and with mutual respect. The governors discharge their statutory and canonical responsibilities rigorously.

The promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. The leadership actively seeks to make the school truly inclusive, and succeeds. Much time and effort has been invested into establishing strong links with a wide range of charities at local, national and global levels and the school is active in the Buckinghamshire Catholic Schools Partnership. Children are able to explain in detail their part in promoting community cohesion and describe how they do so through a range of fundraising and other activities. Children also talk enthusiastically about their work in studying other faiths. The school continues to seek ways in which this area can be further developed.

The prayer life, worship and chaplaincy in the school are outstanding. Prayer is central to the life of the school. The Oratory is a very special place in the school and is treated with great reverence by the children and staff, and resources are allocated to maintain and develop it further. It is well used for the celebration of mass and for other times of prayer such as class meditations. The priest chaplain has a deep commitment to the school. He goes to great efforts to empower staff and pupils to prepare liturgies. He visits the school frequently to celebrate mass and lead other celebrations, and is well supported by the chaplaincy team and the children's liturgy team, who are very enthusiastic about their role. Parents and carers are made very welcome at the services. There is a good quality prayer focus in each classroom and the children's own prayers, often deeply reflective, are widely used in class prayers and liturgies.

The quality of teaching is good overall and examples of outstanding practice were observed. Lessons are well planned and resourced. Provision is made for pupils of differing abilities through offering work to match ability and support from teaching assistants; some of this support is of a very high standard. ICT is used widely and effectively to aid learning, a notable example being in a class where ICT was used to show the story of creation in words and pictures so that all the class could see and read the story, enabling the teacher to question and extend understanding. Good quality learning is found across the school in RE lessons.

The RE curriculum is outstanding. Children display a very good knowledge of religious matters. The school's core knowledge scheme supplements the Here I Am programme to enrich the pupils' learning. Opportunities for progression are well planned. A very broad range of activities in lessons facilitates good learning and the pupils' response is outstanding. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is outstanding. The school complies with the Bishops' Conference and Diocesan recommendations on time allocation for RE.

Assessment in RE is good. It is carried out in line with nationally agreed guidelines. Books are marked thoughtfully and there are good and often detailed comments from teachers that help children to progress with their understanding. Pupils' progress is tracked through the school and the information is used to guide teachers' planning. Time is devoted to moderating RE assessments in the school.

The inspectors would like to express their thanks for the warm welcome and open attitude that all members of the school community showed them during the inspection.