



# DIOCESE OF Arundel and Brighton

## DENOMINATIONAL (S48) INSPECTION REPORT

### Cottesmore St. Mary Catholic Primary School

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School Unique Reference Number: 114567

<b>Headteacher:</b>	Mrs Rachel Breen
<b>Chair of Governors:</b>	Mr James Brady
<b>Lead Inspector:</b>	Mrs Theresa Kenefick
<b>Associate Inspector:</b>	Ms Fiona McGonigle
<b>Inspection date:</b>	March 18 <sup>th</sup> 2016

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	Previous Inspection: 2
	This inspection: 1
<b>Catholic Life:</b>	1
<b>Collective Worship:</b>	1
<b>Religious Education:</b>	1

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

Cottesmore St. Mary's is an outstanding Catholic school because:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Catholic life of the school is outstanding, characterised by a distinctive warmth and sense of welcome.</li> <li>• The sense of belonging is strong and it is very apparent that everyone plays a role in contributing to the community, both in school and beyond.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships are caring and supportive and the sense of community in the school is a tangible joy to observe.</li> <li>• The headteacher and her team are passionate in their leadership of Cottesmore St Mary's, committed to working to build further this strong Catholic community.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors play an active and evaluative role in the school, know the school's strengths well and commit fully to further development.</li> <li>• It is clear that living in this praying community is having an impact on the pupils and the opportunities provided for them to develop spiritually is a very affirming experience.</li> <li>• 'The community feel at the shared masses and assemblies is second to none,' was expressed by one parent in the questionnaire.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All children are making very good progress in their learning.</li> <li>• Pupils demonstrate a confident religious literacy and a good understanding of their faith story.</li> <li>• Learning behaviour in lessons is excellent, with all pupils on task at all times.</li> <li>• In outstanding lessons, teachers demonstrated a deep understanding of the faith and imparted this to pupils in interesting and dynamic ways.</li> <li>• There was fluidity about the pace of outstanding lessons, with pupils constantly challenged by well-tuned teacher expectations.</li> </ul>

## FULL REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cottesmore St. Mary is a large voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. It is situated in the Brighton and Hove Deanery. The school serves three parishes of St Peter's, Sacred Heart and St. George's. There are currently 436 pupils on roll, 93% of whom are Catholic. The majority of pupils are White British but a significant and growing proportion of them (26.3%) are from other ethnic minority groups. The proportion who speak English as an additional language has increased over recent years, now at 19% which is just below national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The number of disadvantaged pupils is well below average. The number of Catholic teachers is 62% of which 4 hold the Certificate in Catholic Education. This is an increase since the last inspection.

## WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

Pupils already demonstrate strength in their religious knowledge and understanding. Teachers now need to ensure that standards of work in their books reflect this strength through an insistence on higher expectations of presentation and attention to detail.

Examples of outstanding teaching in the school provide excellent models for colleagues. These practitioners should be used to demonstrate how well paced, fluid and dynamic lessons can bring about even more depth of learning and motivation for pupils.

## CATHOLIC LIFE

### THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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**The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

- Cottesmore St Mary is a warm and welcoming school community guided by a strong sense of mission and a desire to 'live life to the full', have an impact on the world around them, living the gospel values and revealing God to others. Pupils benefit from being members of this special Catholic school in many ways.
- Pupils and other stakeholders contribute fully and regularly to evaluating the Catholic life of the school, as evidenced through surveys, discussions and through other channels of communication such as the School Council and the Fair Trade group.
- The sense of belonging is strong and it is very apparent that everyone plays a role in contributing to the community, both in school and beyond. One governor referred to pupils who having transferred to the adjacent secondary school come back to seek out their previous buddies.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are happy, confident and demonstrate good secure emotional and social development. The atmosphere on the playground is happy and purposeful. The popular weekly Good Disciple assembly rewards pupils who have demonstrated values in action, often as recognised by their peers. On the playground they know that they are 'not to be a bystander' and that they have a collective duty to ensure that problems are resolved.
- In their class work and in discussion with them, pupils demonstrate that they have a clear understanding of the importance of forgiveness. They write thank you and sorry prayers.
- Ample opportunities exist for pupils of all ages to be involved in the community. Of particular note, the Mini Vinnies look for ways to help the wider community, being instrumental in helping with the local food bank and more recently writing to the housebound of the parish. Similarly, year 4 are currently engaged weekly in making sandwiches for the charity Antifreeze. Coupled with roles held by sports leaders, office angels and school council, this is a school where children learn from an early age what it means to have a vocation and to serve others.

- The vast majority of children are Catholic. Evidence in displays, in religious education lessons and in other curriculum areas ensures that their understanding of other faiths is well developed. By the time they leave the school, pupils have studied a variety of religions and other cultures.
- Pupils of all ages spoke proudly of their faith and were able to articulate tangible examples of what it means to be a Catholic school, from the prayer life to the religious symbols and artefacts around the school and the way they behave as members of the community.

**The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding** as exemplified by:

- The mission statement, which is displayed extensively in the school is clearly central to daily living. As one child said, 'We follow in Jesus' footsteps'.
- Relationships are caring and supportive and the sense of community in the school is a tangible and a joy to observe. Pupils here gain confidence from a distinctively Catholic culture which engenders respect, politeness and friendliness.
- The environment, both from a learning and spiritual point of view is inspiring and uplifting both in central spaces and in classrooms where prayer focus areas are special. The photographs of values in action provide helpful examples to pupils and models for their own spiritual growth.
- For Education in Personal Relationships (EPR), the school uses SEAL materials alongside other resources developed by the Local Authority's Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) team and there is ample evidence in the books of this work. Through surveys, pupils noted the impact that anti-bullying week and e-safety week has on them. The school cites an increase in need in the community for support as leading to a focus on mental health awareness. SMSC is clear and strong in the school.
- This is a school which strongly supports families and children whose circumstances may have made them hard to reach. Examples were cited where financial support is provided for low income families; the Family Support Worker assists where appropriate and support channels such as counselling and Rainbows for bereavement are involved when needed.
- Staff are well inducted into and supported with their work in providing effective religious education. They are provided with a buddy and benefit from deanery wide planning days, peer to peer support, taking their lead from a supportive leadership team. The degree to which staff are valued and thanked in the school is to be praised.
- Behaviour polices are rooted in gospel values. The Peaceful Problem Solving Strategy and the importance placed on forgiveness are key messages imparted to pupils and were clearly embedded in practice.

**How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding** as exemplified by:

- The headteacher and her team are passionate in their leadership of Cottesmore St Mary, committed to working to build further this strong Catholic community.
- Governors play an active and evaluative role in the school, exemplified by focus visits, being linked to classes, attendance at key events and a commitment to their own training through diocesan courses; all of this leads to a high sense of self-evaluation in the school and a leadership team which knows its school's strengths well and commits to focussing on development.
- Among governors there is a strong recognition of the leadership provided by the headteacher and her team, with one governor saying, 'The effort and dedication that leaders and staff put into the Catholic life of the school really seem to shine out'.
- 'A school that has woven living faith and practical worship into its daily fabric,' is how one foundation governor described Cottesmore St Mary, feeling 'privileged' to hold the role.

- School leaders record in their self-evaluation that a key aim of the school is to provide opportunities so that all are able to see God in themselves and reveal him to others. In their commitment to this aim, Cottesmore St Mary is truly distinct in its Catholic identity and the example it provides to the community of the Church and its mission.
- There was a tremendous response to the inspection questionnaire sent to parents, with 270 returned. The message from the parent body is one of overwhelming support for the Catholic ethos created and the religious education provided by Cottesmore St Mary. A few parents noted that they did not feel informed about what is taught in religious education lessons but the school does send out the termly information leaflets to parents which is a good source to which these parents could refer.
- The school provides ample opportunity for parents and carers to be involved and to keep abreast of their child’s development. One governor spoke of the changing demographics of the school and the new challenge of adapting to meet the needs of pupils with new languages and cultures.

## **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP / PRAYER AND PRAYER LIFE**

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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship and Prayer Life
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life

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### **How well pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding**

- As exemplified by the great wealth of opportunity for pupils to actively participate in their own spiritual journeys through acts of worship and prayer. The school’s self-evaluation suggests that their children have a ‘religious dexterity’ when it comes to preparing and participating in acts of worship and this was observed fully during inspection.
- Pupils demonstrated deep reverence and engaged in heartfelt response during the meditation and the Lectio Divina sessions, with time for quiet reflection and prayerful silence.
- Ample evidence in class books, folders, through photographs and pupil records, was seen that pupils enjoy preparing liturgies for their peers and look forward to it being their turn. ‘Buddy Masses’ provide a chance for older pupils to model reverence in prayer and worship to younger peers. Pupils always make something to give their buddies during these celebrations demonstrating a strong sense of mission to provide for others.
- Pupils display confidence in their preparation for worship. For class liturgy and for whole school worship, children are confident in selecting appropriate artefacts, providing prayers and setting up foci for worship spaces. Often they commit to their responsibility by preparing at home.
- During a tour of classrooms, it became clear that across the school pupils engage in and enjoy the prayer life of the school. They spoke highly of the prayer areas and liked it when a new pupil starts at the school, they place a small pebble in a vase in central prayer area. The playing of appropriate music in this area contributes significantly to a powerful atmosphere. Quotes from scripture painted directly onto corridor walls serve also to support community members in their daily spiritual experiences.

- During the observed KS1 assembly, pupils engaged in joyful singing, signing as they sang the hymn; they collectively touched their hearts when asked by the headteacher, 'Where is the Holy Spirit?' Pupils acted out the story of Palm Sunday and their peers clearly enjoyed the experience.
- It is clear that living in this praying community is having a positive impact on the pupils and the opportunities provided for them to develop spiritually are highly effective.
- One parent summarised her experience of Cottesmore St Mary as, 'My children have a very strong sense of faith' and this was wholly upheld on the day of inspection.

**The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding as exemplified by**

- The school places great emphasis on providing opportunities for pupils and others 'to develop further their relationship with God'. Their execution of this is tangible in very many ways.
- A great breadth of prayer and worship is integrated into planning by leaders with the impact that the pupils' experience of their faith is refreshing, real and living. Of note is the school's commitment to bringing the Year of Mercy to the community; each classroom door is laden with evidence that shows that the children are responding to Pope Francis' call to engage with acts of mercy. Parents joined staff and children to welcome the icon of Our Lady of Consolation into the school and there is strong evidence that the children are well versed in what they can do to demonstrate acts of mercy over the coming year.
- One parent stated, 'The community feel at the shared Masses and assemblies is second to none'.
- A thought for the day on the staff notice board and opportunities such as participating in Lectio Divina ensure that this is a school where staff enjoy being members of a praying, worshipping community. Staff and governors also benefit from off-site retreat days.
- Parents and other stakeholders are welcomed to prayer and worship events, for instance, in May and October a morning school Rosary group and an after school prayer group. Parents welcome these and many other opportunities to join the community in worship as exemplified by the high numbers who attend. The May Mass, culminating in a picnic for the whole family, exemplifies the school's commitment to whole community prayer and worship and is 'cherished by families' and noted by governors as an excellent time to reflect together.
- Appointing a designated leader for collective worship, spirituality and prayer, alongside a governor with the same role, demonstrates the school's commitment to ensuring high quality provision
- Staff ensure that pupils develop a strong understanding of the liturgical year. Close to Holy Week, it became apparent during inspection that across the school pupils had a very good grasp of their liturgical heritage. Reception children were confident with key moments in Jesus' life and in Year Five pupils knew the story of the Passion very well.

**How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding as exemplified by:**

- Leadership in this area, as provided by the Headteacher, guides and truly shapes this community.
- The strong religious education team (leader for religious education, leader for EPR and leader for worship), along with two religious education governors ensure that thorough attention is given to self-evaluation and to further development across the school. Policy reviews take place every three years and invite the views of staff, parents and governors as the future direction of the school is shaped.
- Having three staff members sharing the role of leadership underlines the school's commitment to their Catholic identity; inspectors considered this model of leadership to be exemplary.

- There are many ways in which the school monitors its work and invites comment from stakeholders. All of this ensures that this is a school which knows itself well and continues to refresh its core offer to pupils by way of acts of worship.
- Leaders model the expectation that all staff should continually develop their skill and understanding of the faith; a forthcoming retreat day will see the religious education team attending Quiet Friday at Worth Abbey
- Leaders are committed to providing strong professional development for staff and encourage the study of Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies. Of note, the parish priest attends staff meetings to enhance teachers' knowledge of the rites, symbols and key aspects of the liturgical year. Staff attend training at DABCEC and leaders ensure that staff feel well supported in their work of providing for the pupils.
- This is a school where leaders set clear direction and make it their responsibility, as they say, 'to ensure that Christ is at the centre of all that the school does'.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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### How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is

- Pupils across the school spoke of their enjoyment of religious education and have confidence in the work they have done. The school self-evaluates based on surveys that pupils enjoy RE and that they can talk about a piece of work which inspires them. This was upheld by inspectors who found that pupils displayed confident religious literacy and had a good understanding of their faith story.
- Learning behaviour in lessons observed was excellent, with all pupils on task and motivated by their learning at all times; this upholds the school's records from observations. Walking around the school, it was evident that the atmosphere is one of purpose and focussed learning.
- One pupil told inspectors that religious education lessons help you, 'to learn about how to live your life properly'. Pupils said that they liked religious education because the tasks were varied and that they were challenged in their work.
- All children are making very good progress. End of year data for 2014/2015 presented by the school indicated that children in Years 2, 4 and 6 made outstanding progress in RE. In Years 1 and 3 progress was not as strong. However, inspectors carried out thorough scrutiny of these groups of pupils and found that subsequent progress has been good. There was no discernible difference between the progress of the cohorts and specific groups of children such as children with special needs or children with an additional language.
- The current Year 6 are on track to make excellent progress, with a good number of pupils expected to exceed age related expected progress. The school keeps abreast of diocesan guidance for the levelling of work and in comparison to other schools.

## **The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good.**

- School observations record that in the academic year 2015/2016, 60% of lessons were outstanding and the rest good. On the day of inspection, all lessons observed were at least good and two were outstanding.
- In observed outstanding lessons the pace maintained by the teachers created a sense of dynamic learning, energy and eagerness. Transitions ensured that learning remained fresh throughout the lesson; the balance between teachers providing input and pupils responding was very good. Progress made in these lessons was rapid. All teachers would benefit from observing these excellent practitioners in action to inform their own practice.
- Across the school inspectors observed pupils whose religious knowledge and understanding was well embedded. Of note, pupils were readily able to recall previous learning and to use this to inform their current work. An example in Reception found pupils able to state that Jesus was special because they had learned previously that he had turned water into wine. In Year 5, pupils paralleled the symbolism of an empty tabernacle in Holy Week, with the emptiness felt by Jesus when he was in the desert, again using previous learning. A strong depth of teacher skill and knowledge in bringing pupils to this stage of understanding and religious literacy was apparent in outstanding lessons.
- Motivational approaches to assessment are encouraging for pupils and inspectors observed that systems were well embedded and known by the pupils. Pupils told inspectors that self differentiation and their 'c' to indicate that they found the work a challenge, are useful tools.
- Pupils are motivated by the 'mild, spicy and hot' differentiation approach to learning which, although guided carefully by teachers, allows them choice and challenge. It is used widely across the curriculum with positive impact. Many groups of pupils were able to explain how the system was helping them to make good progress and gain confidence.
- Where marking was excellent, teachers were highly affirming of pupils' work and provided an interactive stimulus to which pupils responded well. 'Driver words' guide marking to ensure that pupils are clear on their next steps in learning. Excellent practitioners in the school provide a good source for peer colleagues to observe marking which is having a positive impact on pupils.

## **How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding** as exemplified by:

- The strong leadership team has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The development plan for religious education shows progress against targets, with impact recently seen in providing pupils with opportunities to self differentiate in their work. One governor described the team as very 'switched on'.
- Leaders are highly committed to ensuring high standards for Cottesmore St Mary and look outward to the wider professional community to enhance practice. Various examples, including the headteacher chairing the local deanery headteacher group and staff leading Year 5 and 6 local moderation, indicate that this is a school which plays a pivotal role in organising collaboration with others.
- The impact of this leadership is a quality of teaching across the school which is good with frequent examples of outstanding practice.
- The school follows diocesan recommended schemes of work, 'Come and See' and 'Journey in Love' to guide its planning for religious education. The subject is well-resourced and teachers use a wide range of skilfully designed learning materials.

- The breadth of external awards held by the school provides validation that pupils at Cottesmore St Mary have an extensive range of experiences on their learning journey, equipping them to be well rounded citizens in our community.
- 99% of parents indicated in school surveys that they would happily recommend Cottesmore to others and it was very evident on the day of inspection as to why. The school states, 'We want children who leave our school to make the most of every learning opportunity so that they can grow into the best people they can be, fulfilling their dreams and God's special plan for them, being happy and confident and joyfully showing to others their faith in God'.

They achieve this in an exemplary way.

## Summary of Inspection Judgements

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.	<b>1</b>
<b>Catholic Life</b>	<b>1</b>
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	<b>1</b>
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school	<b>1</b>
How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	<b>1</b>
<b>Collective Worship and Prayer Life</b>	<b>1</b>
How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship and Prayer Life.	<b>1</b>
The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.	<b>1</b>
How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.	<b>1</b>
<b>Religious Education</b>	<b>1</b>
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	<b>1</b>
The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education	<b>2</b>
How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education	<b>1</b>