DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

URN 118780

St Peter's Catholic Primary School

West Ridge

Sittingbourne

Kent

ME10 1UJ

Inspection date:	**25th April 2023**
Chair of the Academy Committee:	**Michael Hutchinson**
Executive Principal:	**Sara Wakefield**
School Principal:	**Catherine Vedamuttu**
Inspectors:	**Stephen Beck**
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CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK

Key for inspection grades

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

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Peter's Catholic Primary School is an academy within the Kent Catholic Schools Partnership and is located in the Chatham Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. The principal parish the school serves is the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Sittingbourne. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 65%, with other pupils being from a range of other Christian denominations or of no faith. The proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in all Key Stages.

All issues raised at the previous Section 48 inspection have been addressed, and it is noteworthy that the school has and continues to provide outstanding Catholic education.

The school is full, taking pupils from 4 to 11 years, and the number currently on roll is 214. Pupils' attainment on entering the school is generally in line with national averages. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average, and those who receive support through the pupil premium grant are 12% of the school population. The school offers extended day provision through breakfast and after-school clubs provided by an external provider.

Around 9% of pupils receive extra support in class. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. An increasing number at 29% are pupils of Black African heritage who have moved into the school's catchment area over recent times. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is spoken as an additional language is 18%. Pupils' attendance is outstanding.

St Peter's School prides itself in its many external accreditation awards, such as the Oscar Romero Award (Participator Level), Music Mark, National Attendance Award, Primary Quality Mark, Primary Science Quality Mark, Green Travel Mark and Maths Hub, a number of which, to the school's credit, have been held and/or renewed over a significant length of time.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Peter's is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- It is a welcoming and inclusive school which is very family-orientated. It is highly valued by those pupils, parents and parishioners it serves. The symbiotic relationship of school leaders is driven by a strong sense of mission and well supported by a committed staff team that makes the school an oasis of care and calmness where pupils are able to develop their faith and understand its influence on their daily lives.
- Pupils and their families are from all faith backgrounds and none. All are welcomed and cherished. The school is rightly held in high esteem by parents and pupils alike. One parent described the school as *'My second home*' with another stating, '*The school is a very kind, caring community where children are nurtured as well as being given a firm education*'.
- The Catholic life of the school is outstanding. All aspects of the school's life are firmly grounded in Gospel values and the teachings of the Church. Pupils are proud of the school's Catholic heritage. Following the example of their teachers and supporting adults, they develop a strong sense of vocation and are enthusiastic in pursuing their mission 'to strive to love and serve him in all that we do'.
- Collective worship is outstanding. Prayer and liturgy play a central role in the life of the school. It is at the heart of the school and is enjoyed by all as a joyful celebration of their faith. Pupils value its impact on their lives and are proud of their role in preparing and leading acts of worship which are creative and engage pupils and deepen their understanding of their faith. One pupil commented, *'No - one is lonely at this school. We pray and learn to serve and show kindness to others.*'
- The teaching and learning of religious education are securely good, with a good proportion of lessons being outstanding. From individual starting points, pupils make progress over time, achieving and often exceeding age-related expectations. Behaviour for learning is a strength of the school, and pupils genuinely enjoy their religious education lessons. Teachers are now well placed to further develop their ability to deepen pupils' understanding by extending their responses and providing more creative opportunities for pupil dialogue and application of their high level of religious vocabulary.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

With no significant areas for development, the school should;

- Continue to develop pupil-led liturgies to involve all key stages in the planning and delivery of them at an age-appropriate level.
- Continue to foster the growing parish links.
- Further, develop the roles of the excellent religious education team to provide for succession planning.

Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.	1

Catholic Life	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	1
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	1

Religious Education	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	1
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	1

Collective Worship	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.	1
The quality of provision for Collective Worship.	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	1

CATHOLIC LIFE

1

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

- The challenge of the school's mission statement, emphasising 'the foundations of Faith, Love and Respect,' is one that the pupils are keen to accept in the context of the mission to have 'A love for God, Ourselves and Others'. This guides all in the school community, and pupils are proud of their school and value the contribution they make to it.
- School governance is extremely strong. Governors have a broad skill set and are both challenging and supportive. They know their school and are well served by the religious education link governor, who ensures with the proactive chair that the high profile given to the Catholic nature of the school is maintained.
- Pupils have a strong sense of vocation as exemplified by their charity work for the Foodbank, Cafod, British Red Cross, Children in Need, NSPCC, School Mission Community Events such as Lenten Prayer sessions, Carol singing and the Travelling Crib. Pupils also experience trips and visitors that enhance pupil's spirituality and their understanding of faith.
- The pupils' excellent behaviour belies the school's social context.
- The high quality and depth of pupils' contributions to displays throughout the school bear witness to the strong Catholic ethos on which the school's work is founded.
- The pupils relish opportunities to serve the school, the parish, and the local community.
- The school's liturgy team members ensure the Christian values of faith, love and respect are adhered to throughout the school in both learning and non-learning sessions.
- A speaker from Cafod visited recently and presented to the whole school and individual classes. They commented, "*The pupil's understanding of Catholic Social Teaching was evident*.' The impact of this is that pupils know that there are people in the community and wider world who are less fortunate than they are and how the principles of Catholic Social Teaching can be applied to support others globally. They learn that giving is as important and as rewarding as receiving.
- The introduction of a Catholic life tab on the school's website has had a significant and positive impact on involving and informing the school community about everything the school does in the wider community, further reflecting Catholic Social Teaching.
- Parents and parishioners' welcome invitations to Masses and liturgies held in the school, and pupils and parents enjoy attending a school-led Sunday Mass each term.

The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The school mission statement is a clear and inspiring expression of the educational mission of the Church.
- There is a strong sense of community at all levels, evident in the high quality of relationships and the centrality of prayer to the whole community. All staff are fully committed to its implementation across the curriculum and the whole of school life. They enthusiastically participate in school activities reflecting the school's Catholic life and mission and avail themselves of relevant professional development on religious education and Catholic life offered in-house or externally.
- The school environment reflects its mission and identity through concrete and practical signs of the school's Catholic character, including areas for prayer and reflection, such as the spiritual garden and sensory garden. High-quality displays and prayer boards are visible and are enhanced by the wide display of pupils' work, along with tasteful religious artefacts.
- All staff promote high standards of behaviour and are exemplary role models of mutual respect and forgiveness for pupils.
- The high level of input by the parish priest is greatly appreciated in supporting and promoting the Catholic life of the school, building confidence in staff and supporting pupil learning.
- The pastoral care at St Peter's is exceptional. The pastoral needs of all staff are understood and exceptionally well catered for. Staff and pupil well-being are key in ensuring that people are happy and enjoy going to school. A counsellor attends the school weekly and works closely with families to support the most vulnerable pupils. Pupils leave her sessions with greater resilience and confidence in themselves.
- The school has a 'Top-Ten' list of opportunities through which it seeks to ensure each pupil experiences during their seven years at St Peter's. Staff incorporate activities the pupils might not otherwise experience. The school is a very supportive, collegiate and joyful community.
- Three staff are trained in provision for Rainbows – a support group for pupils who have suffered grief and loss funded by the Catholic Children's Society.
- As expressed in questionnaires, letters and face-to-face, parents' views are consistently positive and highly supportive of all the school provides.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding

- There is a deep commitment to the Catholic life of the school by leaders and local governors at St Peter's. Development of this area has been commendably maintained since the last inspection so that all stakeholders have realised a sense of ownership of Catholic life. Monitoring and evaluation systems have been further strengthened.
- Leaders and local governors are strong role models for promoting the Catholic life of the school. Active involvement of the local governing body, as well as the parish priest, ensures that challenge and support are offered.

- The principal, as religious education subject leader, along with key staff, particularly the religious education team, are not complacent, and continue to plan for further development - for example, through the school's development plan. There is an opportunity to develop the roles within the religious education team to provide more distributive leadership of the subject and build in planning for succession. The provision for Catholic life is afforded the highest priority by leaders, who correctly identify this in their self-evaluation documents.
- Senior leaders have prioritised the development of a 'Spiritual garden' over the last two academic years. The spiritual garden is well respected and used appropriately by staff and pupils during structured and unstructured times. In lesson times and during reflection, teachers provide peaceful and mindful experiences to listen and reflect on the teaching. The liturgical calendar, pupils' families and the parish contribute to the space. Pupils and staff work together to generate 'Big Questions', which focus on their curiosities in scripture as well as on the school values. Parents and the parish, including the Parish Priest, are invited to respond to these questions and the pupils' responses which often form the starting point for Catholic teaching in class. Pupils said, "*They enjoy big questions because you have opinions of your own, and it's like a debate*".
- As a result of successful strategies and a nurturing, welcoming ethos, parents and carers speak highly of the school and the staff. They say, *'We love the school, and our child attends church regularly and is close to their faith*'. Another wrote, *'My child comes home reciting songs of worship and prayers. They also understand important Christian celebrations such as Lent, Easter and Christmas. I am always informed and invited to religious festivities*.'
- The school is enthusiastic in its response to diocesan policies and initiatives and actively promotes the Bishop's vision for the diocese throughout the school. They are outward looking and work closely with another Catholic school and within the Kent Catholic Schools Partnership, in which they are active. This is evidenced in the school's focus on moderation of assessment over recent times.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

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

- Pupils' achievements and enjoyment in religious education are outstanding, and their attainment in religious education is generally high. All year groups follow The Way, the Truth and the Life scheme, which is well used as a 'springboard' by all staff.
- Analysis of assessments undertaken provides evidence of pupils attaining at least an appropriate level for their age and stage of development in each key stage, and many exceed this expectation.
- No teaching observed was less than good, with a good proportion being outstanding.
- There is no difference in performance between pupils of different gender, with outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs being similar to their peers. They are enabled to participate fully in lessons to achieve their potential. They respond very well to suitably designed tasks provided and highly effective support from additional adults in the classroom.
- Pupils' religious literacy is highly ordered due to skilful targeted questioning, keywords, and teacher encouragement. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developing according to their age or capacity. They are utilising the skills that enable them to reflect spiritually, think ethically and theologically, and become more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. They link their learning to their own experiences and are happy to share this with their peers, and teachers model these links with their own lives by way of example. The impact of this means that they learn from each other and learn to celebrate everyone's experiences.
- Pupils' engagement in and enjoyment of their learning is outstanding, as shown by their interest, enthusiasm and behaviour in lessons. Pupils remain diligently on task, showing sustained concentration levels. Reflective marking is consistent across the classes meaning that all pupils can access and address their verbal and written teacher feedback and can articulate their next steps.
- Pupils are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively. They are keen to learn and improve their knowledge, understanding and skills as they become more independent learners. This could be developed further.
- The Life to the Full resource is used for teaching relationships and health education. Parents are signposted to the parent online portal from Ten-Ten to help them access the curriculum content ahead of the pupil sessions in school. Parents expressed their strong support for this programme and the school's approach.
- Pupils benefit from strong lesson planning and consistency of approaches across the school, appropriate use of information technology, and strong growing cross-curricular links with excellent use being made of scripture, pupils' knowledge of which, is a strength of the school. The school's 'Progression of Skills' document is used to support teachers in planning for all pupils in the class wherever they are achieving.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.

- Teaching is mostly outstanding, and teachers maximise learning for every pupil. They have high expectations and evaluate how well the pupils do throughout lessons, giving pupils confidence in their work. Teachers use time effectively to maximise learning opportunities. This includes paired discussions, use of working walls, excellent use of outside space, consistent praise for achievement, and individual and collaborative work. Consequently, pupils are highly motivated and sustain high levels of concentration.
- In outstanding lessons observed, teachers built on previous learning. Plenaries were used as an opportunity not only to reflect on learning but to develop pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking.
- Pupils are outstanding in sharing their knowledge and understanding, and their discussions highlighted their thirst for further challenge. Providing ongoing professional development of 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' and how it can be used to challenge and extend will continue to provide wonder, enjoyment and a greater depth of religious education.
- Teaching Assistants are highly effective and provide outstanding care and focused support to pupils.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding.

- Leaders and governors are outstanding in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision of religious education. It is viewed as the core subject in the school and is regularly discussed at senior leadership, staff and governors' meetings.
- Leaders and governors ensure that religious education is comparable to other core curriculum subjects in terms of professional development, resourcing, staffing and accommodation. Religious education has a high profile in the school's overall development plan as well as a separate religious education improvement plan. The self-evaluation provided for this inspection was accurate, well-linked to the development plans, and is a working document.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and at each key stage. They safeguard the required curriculum time for religious education in each key stage. Self-evaluation of religious education reflects frequent assessment, tracking, monitoring, analysis and self-challenge, which is informed by current best practices in religious education. This results in strategic action taken by the school, which leads to excellent outcomes in religious education.
- Formal assessments are rigorously undertaken, levelled and subsequently moderated across the school and another Catholic school. This ensures consistency in teacher judgements, and progress is carefully tracked across the school.

- The curriculum leader for religious education and the executive principal have a clear vision for teaching and learning and a high level of expertise in securing this vision. This is used to improve teaching and learning, resulting in teaching that is at least consistently good and frequently outstanding. They impact significantly on the subject, demonstrating great passion. They ensure religious education is discussed regularly at staff and senior management meetings, and has priority in development plans.
- Leaders and governors ensure that religious education is planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils to secure coherence across the school. The subject is reported very well in a detailed, personal manner to parents who are given opportunities to help their children at home through, for example, curriculum newsletters.
- The parish priest's active participation in school life enhances the curriculum, supports staff development and significantly impacts the pupils' understanding.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

- St Peter's is a prayerful community where pupils' response to and participation in collective worship is excellent. It is well developed, and a central part of pupils' experience from the earliest years.
- It is strongly pupil led by upper key stage 2 pupils who lead and prepare collective worship with enthusiasm and confidence. Under the guidance of staff and with welcome support from the parish, they have become increasingly skilled in using a variety of ways of praying and in using scripture, drama, religious artefacts and hymns in their worship.
- The school's liturgy group is very proactive in the provision of engaging celebrations, and it would be opportune to utilise them to train other year groups in age-appropriate ways.
- Pupils throughout the school know what constitutes the various elements of worship. They understand there are different forms of liturgies and understand the Church's seasons and liturgical year well. All of this contributes positively to their spiritual and moral development, which is outstanding.
- The school utilises the 'Wednesday Word' via class-based prayer time, and parents indicated they appreciate the 'Wednesday Word' being shared through a link on the school website.
- Inspectors attended an assembly led by pupils who spoke and read well, posed questions to their peers, and utilised role play, all with confidence and enthusiasm. Good use was made of scripture from the previous Sunday's Mass. The pupils were very much in charge of the celebration providing a period for reflection on 'how they would show their love for Jesus over the coming week' and an opportunity for spontaneous prayer.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

- Staff are skilled at creating quality worship experiences for the school community, including staff liturgies. There is a palpable sense that this is a Christ-centred, praying community and its pupils have many varied opportunities to develop their spirituality. Opportunities are also planned to attract attendance by families, and the school plans to develop this further.
- Other faiths are celebrated and explored so pupils know about differences and diversity in their community and beyond. This is linked to learning about important festivals to enhance pupils' experiences and knowledge. The school makes good use of visitors and families of other faiths to share their beliefs to support the teaching of other faiths.

- St Peter's is proud of their choir. Singing and music are strengths and significantly enhance liturgical celebrations. The school channels singing and music to ensure it plays a vital part in the positive well-being of all.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

- Leaders and governors are outstanding in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for collective worship. Leaders have expert knowledge of providing policies and guidelines to ensure quality planning and delivery of collective worship.
- Collective worship is given the highest possible priority in planning and resourcing, and there is a clear purpose, message and direction to all forms of worship in the school.
- Leaders place the highest priority on staff professional development, incorporating liturgical formation and the planning of collective worship and have encouraged staff to avail of continued professional development.
- Leaders regularly report to governors, and governors prioritise collective worship on the school's religious education self-evaluation with regular reviews of school performance.