

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



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

ST TERESA'S INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

Aylesbury Road, Princes Risborough
Buckinghamshire, HP27 0JW

DfE Number: 825/6028

Headmaster: Mr S Detre
Chair of Governors: Mrs M Cripps

Reporting Inspectors:
Mrs M Basham, Mrs J Dowsett

Date of Inspection: 29 January 2016
Date Report Issued: 8 March 2016

Information about the school

St. Teresa's Catholic Independent School is a non-selective preparatory day school for pupils aged 3- 11 years. It shares its site with the parish church of St Teresa of the Child Jesus. The school was founded in 1945 by the Daughters of Jesus religious order who managed it until 1970. It is now a charitable trust run by a board of governors. There are 147 pupils on roll, 35% of whom are Catholic. The intake is mainly drawn from the surrounding area with 91% being White British. Half of the teachers and 73% of the non-teaching staff are Catholic. There are thirty six members of staff which includes a non-teaching deputy and the new headmaster who has been in post since September 2015.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires Improvement 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

St Teresa's is a good Catholic school which provides outstanding pastoral care for its pupils. The headmaster and staff at all levels are committed to ensuring that each child is given the opportunity to discover and develop his or her God given talents. A family spirit exists within the community which encourages pupils to feel happy and safe. This nurturing environment enables pupils to become confident, articulate learners who show respect and kindness to one another. Behaviour is excellent. Prayer and worship are given a high priority. Governors are fully involved in school life, having recently formed a committee to monitor, evaluate and further develop the Catholic ethos of the school.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 2

At the heart of St Teresa's school is the belief and understanding that each child possesses a special gift and uniqueness. The ability to recognise pupils' differences and to value and celebrate them is a real strength of the school. As one child commented 'we are encouraged to find our vocation in life'.

Staff, governors and parents are proud to belong to this inclusive community. The religious education leader is hard working and dedicated to promoting opportunities for children to develop spiritually and emotionally. The headmaster has plans to introduce a new monitoring and evaluation process to further strengthen current practice. St Teresa's is currently piloting and developing the assessment procedures produced by the Bucks Catholic Schools Partnership. Governors are fully aware of their responsibilities. They communicate a shared vision to hold the school to account for the Catholic dimension and standards of attainment in Religious Education.

What the school should do to improve further

- further raise expectations to improve the quality of work produced by pupils in RE
- provide greater challenge for more able pupils in RE
- ensure all ability groups have access to appropriate resources and targeted support in RE
- introduce more rigorous monitoring procedures to further improve the quality of teaching in RE.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 2

Pupils at St Teresa's make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school. Being a Stewardship School means that Year 6 pupils have the opportunity to share their time, talents and treasure with others. 'We try to set a pleasing example and encourage other children to behave in the best possible way' is how one child described his role. At the start of Year 6 an Induction Liturgy takes place as pupils prepare to take on a responsibility in school that is suited to their unique gifts. Some of these include helping the lay chaplain by organising prayer tables and ringing the bell for Sacred Time, taking charge of the Current Events board or assisting the games teacher with tidying sports equipment. Thinking of how each can use their talents to help others is a

powerful way of enabling pupils to understand that everyone has something to offer. This is expressed in the school's Mission Statement: ' Every child has a future in this world and the next'. The Little Way Award is presented to pupils who show kindness and care towards others through little actions in their everyday lives.

An active school council enables pupils to be part of the school's development process. Pupils plan their own fundraising events for local and overseas charities. They design posters to be displayed in school to remind everyone of school rules and priorities. Opportunities to show prospective parents around on Open Day encourages pupils to develop good social and communication skills. Pupils at St Teresa's have many opportunities to develop confidence and a real sense of self-worth.

Pupils pray with reverence and respect during times of prayer and worship. Sacred Time gives everyone space to reflect in a peaceful environment. Class prayer books demonstrate that pupils have the opportunity to write their own thoughts and prayers. Pupils are encouraged to pray for others and as one child wrote in their book 'do small things with love'. Each class has a governor prayer friend. The school is making good use of the Diocesan Prayer Bags into which pupils have added their own prayers and artefacts.

Chaplaincy provision is outstanding and is firmly embedded in the life of the school. Opportunities are available for pupils to access support when needed. The lay chaplain, who is also the R.E. leader, works tirelessly to ensure that pupils are supported by all members of her team. She liaises with the parish and organises liturgies and celebrations. Parents comment on the exceptional level of care offered to their children. Pupils respond by showing compassion to one another. The Year 6 stewards help in the Chapel which is a peaceful area where pupils often gather. Pupils behave with concern, tolerance and respect for everyone. 'A calm, caring atmosphere ' is how one parent described the school.

Religious Education teaching is informative with good questioning and assessment procedures. Pupils respond effectively when learning is relevant with good use of visual resources, the Bible and appropriate activities. Research skills are well developed with pupils being able to access bible references competently. Pupils behave very well in lessons. They begin tasks quietly, can work collaboratively and speak with confidence when making presentations to the class. At times, work lacks depth and challenge. More opportunities to learn *from* religion would enhance pupils' understanding and enable them to produce work of a higher standard and quality.

Leaders and Managers

Grade 2

Leaders place a strong emphasis on monitoring and developing the Catholic life of the school. The Chair of Governors is committed to promoting and developing the distinctively Catholic character of St Teresa's. A new governors' committee has been formed to ensure that the school's Catholic ethos is maintained and links strengthened with the wider community. The headmaster has produced a new Development Plan through which he aims to increase focus on raising standards in the teaching and learning of religious education.

The R.E. subject leader attends training and meetings to moderate work and provides induction for new staff. She teaches religious education in three year groups, oversees teachers' planning and assessment and conducts book scrutinies and lesson observations. As lay chaplain she also works closely with teachers to promote pupils' personal development. She leads the school council and is dedicated to providing prayerful liturgies for pupils. She knows the pupils well, providing them with outstanding moral and spiritual guidance. She is responsible for writing and updating the Religious Education Self-Evaluation Form and liaising with governors and staff on matters of spirituality and religious education.

Provision

Grade 2

Pupils are encouraged to pray with sincerity and develop their relationship with God through silent prayer. Whole school assemblies take place twice a week and a liturgy once a week for Year 1 and

Year 2 based on the current 'Come and See' topic. During inspection the younger pupils responded well during their liturgy, singing with enthusiasm and giving thanks to God. In KS2 Year 5 pupils attend a residential centre which includes time for prayer and reflection. Year 6 spend a week in France visiting Lisieux to learn more about the school's patron, St Teresa.

The parish priest conducts reconciliation services during Advent and Lent. A school Prayer Board is available for children to display their special intentions. The whole school celebrates the Patronal Feast Day by holding a Community Day to which governors, families and parishioners are invited.

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is sometimes variable. At its best learning is purposeful, meaningful and relevant. Children progress well when lessons move at a brisk pace and teachers have high expectations, differentiating work to provide the necessary challenge for each ability group. During inspection the Reception children were totally involved in their lesson when they had the opportunity to interview a Year 6 steward about her role as an altar server. Resources were used well to aid learning. The children were excited to make a square which then formed a banner in the shape of a cross designed to welcome people to St Teresa's. Drama and role play are used to encourage children to empathise. These skills require further development across the school in religious education. Opportunities to learn *from* religion [AT2] in lessons need to be further explored, with more challenge and focus for the more able pupils. All classes have capable teaching assistants who could at times be deployed more effectively to ensure standards are raised in all ability groups. Research and enquiry skills are well developed. Each pupil in KS2 possesses their own Bible.

The school follows the Diocesan approved Scheme of Work. As part of the 'Come and See' curriculum the school holds two world faith weeks per year. The R.E. leader plans to develop these weeks more fully to ensure pupils gain a deeper understanding of different faiths and cultures. Inspectors agree that a more creative approach and use of resources would enhance children's learning in this area. The colourful stained glass windows around the school show how art is used as a stimulus and the well-stocked art room is a useful resource for teaching religious education. ICT is planned into the R.E. curriculum and used effectively by the pupils. Additional resources to aid learning in lessons would enable pupils of all abilities to achieve higher levels of attainment.

At St Teresa's school the Gospel values expressed through the Mission Statement are evident in the way pupils are encouraged to recognise their talents and use them wisely. The inspectors wish to thank the headmaster, R.E. leader, staff, governors and parents for their co-operation and warm welcome. A special thank you to all the pupils for their friendliness and excellent behaviour.