



# **DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT**

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

**URN 140537**

**St Simon Stock Catholic School**

**Oakwood Park**

**Maidstone, Kent**

**ME16 0JP**

**Inspection date: 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

**Chair of Governors: Susan Harms**

**Academy Principal: Mr Jon Malone**

**Inspectors: Mrs Catherine Burnett**

**Mrs Patricia Horsman**

## **EDUCATION COMMISSION**

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR

Tel 01689 829331

**Director of Education: Dr Simon Hughes**



### Key for inspection grades

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

## FULL REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Simon Stock Catholic School is part of the Kent Catholic Schools Partnership. The Academy serves the Catholic community of Maidstone and West Kent. It is a non-selective, mixed comprehensive Catholic Comprehensive school which takes pupils from Years 7-13. The School has 1,134 students, the main primary school being St Francis Catholic Primary School. Two other feeder primary schools are the Catholic primary partners in Medway, St Benedict's and St Thomas More.

A new leadership structure has been put in place since the last inspection, with an Executive Principal supporting and overseeing St Simon Stock and St Gregory's Schools. Chaplaincy is also undergoing new leadership with an area chaplain in place since October 2021 who works across the two schools. In addition, three members of the teaching staff support aspects of chaplaincy, whole school spirituality and professional development. The school has excellent links with the deanery and accesses regular support from deanery priests and deacons.

Religious Education is taught as a distinct subject from Year 7 through to Year 13. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 receive 10% of dedicated Religious Education curriculum time over a two-week period with post 16 students receiving a dedicated one lesson per week. Philosophy and Ethics is an optional subject in the Sixth Form. The amount of scheduled Religious Education meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference for curriculum time in every year group.

There is a large chapel on site which provides a flexible space for meditation and reflection activities. The chapel is decorated with pupil work and pupils have been involved in its design and formation. The chapel provides an oasis of calm and there are further plans to ensure the chapel meets the initial vision. The St Josephine Bakhita hub is a new resource for the school combining the previous supported learning hub and reflection areas. This resource has increased provision for individual support, interventions and wellbeing. In addition, the school works closely with Place2Be to support the mental health of pupils. The school community embraces its associate Lasallian school status and this can be seen throughout the liturgical strategic planning as well as through Catholic Worship and the Catholic Life of the community. The school leaders have addressed the targets set in the last inspection and are now developing the planned retreat provision for all pupils.



## **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS**

St Simon Stock Catholic School is an Outstanding Catholic school because:

- The Catholic Life is at the heart of the school permeating everything the school offers to pupils, staff and parents, creating a distinct family where everyone feels valued.
- Governors and leaders promote high quality liturgical events and acts of Catholic Worship, forming a strong foundation for Catholic ethos and an exploration of faith.
- Extensive access to clergy through the deanery enables priests and deacons to be fully integrated into the community and life of the school. This model enriches the resources within the school and supports all staff to embrace the Catholic Life of the school in their various roles.
- Outcomes in Religious Education are well above the national average.

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

- Develop the capacity for student leadership at all levels, including leading prayer and other forms of worship.
- Embed sustainable Chaplaincy leadership which expands opportunities for the whole school community.
- Embed the assessment and marking policy in Religious Education to ensure students in all key stages know what they need to do to improve.
- Develop opportunities for stretch, challenge and deeper exploration in learning, particularly in Key Stage 3.



## Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.	1
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### 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

	2
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	2
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.	2
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.**

- Pupils, parents and staff speak highly of the school community, describing it as having a family atmosphere where 'everyone helps and supports each other'. One member of staff described the community as 'living the values which are ingrained in the staff'.
- The pupils are familiar with the Catholic and Lasallian principles of the school and actively model them in their school life. This is seen in the respect and appreciation from pupils who value both their school and staff.
- Leaders ensure fundraising is a regular event at the school, with a charity being assigned to each term. Charities range from local charities such as Hello Yellow and the Noah's Ark food bank through to national and international charities such as Cancer Research and CAFOD.
- Pupils are trained as peer mentors and are provided with an opportunity to become involved with providing the voice of students on a rotational basis.
- Pupils are encouraged to become involved in decision making for the school, for example, in the planning of the De La Salle chapel and the naming of the St Josephine Bakhita hub.
- Pupils actively participate in whole school reward programmes and opportunities such as 'The Stocky Awards' and, during lockdown, the virtual Lasallian awards.
- A range of opportunities enable pupils to demonstrate advocacy in liturgical services, Mass, Advent reflections, prayer and 'Faith in Action' projects.
- A prefect system which links to the 'Faith in Action Pillar', based on the Lasallian principle 'Faith in the Presence of God', provides opportunities for students to be actively involved in the Catholic Life of the school.
- Leaders have established a retreat programme and pupils from all year groups are encouraged to participate. Recently 24 Sixth Form students benefitted from a retreat to St Cassian's Lasallian retreat centre in Kintbury. One parent described this opportunity for their child as 'life changing'. A whole year group retreat is planned for Year 7. The school ensures that any pupil wishing to participate in a retreat is able to do so.
- Pupils take responsibility for their school and their community in a variety of ways such as volunteering at open evenings, the Duke of Edinburgh programme and serving as prefects, mentors and the Youth Engagement Board.



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

- Leaders have implemented a rebuilding programme post lockdown for retreat and extra-curricular programmes. In the assembly observed, the Lasallian principle of 'Inclusive Communities' encouraged pupils to enrich their lives through extra-curricular opportunities. The staff and pupils delivering the assembly invited pupils to share thoughts and ideas. Their eagerness to participate was evidenced in the overflowing box of ideas.
- The chapel is at the heart of the school and is open to everyone to use. It was evident through observations and conversations with staff, pupils and clergy that the chapel is well used and the open access highly valued.
- Staff spoke highly of a recent staff training day at Aylesford which enabled them all to deepen their understanding of the faith values of the school.
- Pupils, staff and parents provided an extensive range of examples which demonstrate a positive impact on their lives through the opportunities to be immersed in the Catholic Life of the school. Staff spoke about a 'culture of Catholicity which is embedded and pervasive'. A parent described there being an 'outworking of faith through policy and practice'.
- Leaders ensure provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the Personal Wellbeing and Development programme is well embedded. The programme is mapped across the whole school curriculum ensuring Catholic Life permeates all aspects of teaching and learning. Staff from a wide range of subjects spoke about how they are able to embrace morality and ethics through their own specialist subjects and extra-curricular activities and felt well supported.
- A Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) policy is in place, which is in line with the diocesan guidelines.
- School leaders have a clear map of Religious Education and ethical topics which are taught throughout the school curriculum. Staff and pupils interviewed by inspectors spoke impressively about how this content is embedded in both subject matter and extra-curricular provision.
- The Josephine Bakhita hub was praised by pupils as a comprehensive support mechanism open to anyone at any time.

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

A commendable strategic vision is in place to expand the chaplaincy provision and resources. The area chaplain, already appointed, will support a programme of training and development of apprentice chaplains, working alongside St Mary's University, Twickenham. The vision is supported at school governance and executive levels. As a school with associate Lasallian status, dedicated to the work of the founder, St John Baptist de La Salle, St Simon Stock is part of an international network of educational



institutions. The school actively participates in the districts of Great Britain, Malta, the Channel Islands and Ireland which collectively have 20 schools and two retreat centres. The school regularly uses one of these retreat centres and attends conferences. Two members of staff are members of the District Management Committee of the schools and working groups.

- Staff beyond the Religious Education department are encouraged to undertake the Catholic Certificate in Religious studies (CCRS). Two members of staff who recently completed the course spoke highly of this opportunity and explained how the course has assisted them in supporting Catholicity in all aspects of the school.
- Clergy are represented on the governing body at both school and executive levels; they support the school by visiting regularly. Comprehensive governor minutes following weekly visits show rigorous discussions, evaluations and support for the school's work to promote the Catholic Life.
- Planning in chaplaincy is strong; leaders are working hard to ensure that its provision for pupils is maintained at its current high standards.
- A wealth of support through the Deanery and access to a substantial team of clergy enables their involvement in all planned activities.



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

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

- Examination results provide evidence of strong progress in Religious Education over time. Historical trends show commendable outcomes above the national average in all key stages.
- The school supports those who want to take the subject at 'A' Level and pupils speak highly of its value. Leaders have developed promotional activities to increase numbers of pupils taking the subject. Sixth form students studying 'A' Level Religious Studies run a Philosophy Society for pupils from Year 9 upwards where they engage with philosophical and ethical questions and lead discussion and debate.
- All sixth form students undertake an hour of core Religious Education which is modular and reflects some of the areas covered in Philosophy and Ethics 'A' level. Students value the course and see its relevance to life and learning.
- Pupils, in the main, expressed an enjoyment of their Religious Education lessons.
- In the range of lessons and abilities observed, behaviour was good.
- Year 9 lessons observed on day two of the inspection demonstrated a greater level of challenge and opportunities for higher level thinking and pupil engagement. In these lessons' inspectors observed opportunities for deep discussion, exploration of concepts and application of content being studied.

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

- The majority of teaching observed was good. A range of teaching was observed incorporating all year groups and at all levels. All Religious Education teachers present during the inspections were observed.
- All lessons were planned to a good standard, and there is consistency of approach across the department. Pupils would benefit from teacher adaptation of department lesson plans to maximise creative exploration opportunities which arise in lessons, leading to deeper learning, challenge and engagement.
- Groups at Key Stage 3 are set using a ranking system which reflects the current feeder primary school assessment system.
- Assessment data showing progress was not always available nor evident in books. Pupils were able to describe their work and were proud of their learning, but some were not aware of the actions they require to improve their work.
- Whilst the process for the whole school formative assessment is understood, inspectors observed this being the first opportunity for some pupils to receive feedback and for target setting to take place.
- The department leaders have high expectations of the pupils. The aspirational targets set need to be revisited regularly in order to ensure they motivate and challenge pupils.





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

- The vision and strategy for Religious Education is strong as evidenced in whole school development and improvement planning.
- Governors discuss matters relating to Religious Education and its provision and are aware of the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. There is a link governor for Religious Education who is also a member of the clergy. The link governor regularly supports and works alongside the department.
- There is a dedicated member of clergy for the Sixth Form in addition to the dedicated school priest. A deacon also supports planning and delivery of reflections which are embedded through the Religious Education curriculum.
- Religious Education is prioritised as a core subject and financed accordingly.
- Leaders provide regular, comprehensive data for governors to review.
- Governors are aware of the new school assessment criteria and support its implementation at Key Stage 3.



## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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

- Pupils engage with worship respectfully and with reverence.
- Pupils and staff see worship as integral to daily life.
- Students respond to the Lasallian call to prayer which was embedded in all lessons observed and clearly the expectation from school leaders. Lessons start with a prayer. Friday Mass is celebrated every week, with each form group having an opportunity during the year to plan and deliver aspects of the Mass.
- Masses at key liturgical points of the year, the start of the year and an annual carol service provide opportunities for pupils to take a lead in readings, the offertory and the choice of hymns.
- Pupils spoke highly about reflection opportunities and clearly value these for both their faith journey and personal wellbeing.
- Reflections continue through Religious Education lessons on a rota basis supported by the link deacon. These were highly valued and commented on by Years 9, 10, 11 and post 16 students whom the inspectors spoke to. Year 7 and 8 will benefit from these opportunities later this year.

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

- Collective Worship is planned into the core life of the school and based on the Lasallian principles.
- Pupils are prepared well for Masses to enable them to take a full part in the celebrations.
- Leaders ensure that daily prayers take place in form time, at the start and end of lessons, and are used to assist pupils in reflecting on their day and achievements. Prayers were evident on post it notes around the prayer tables and the chapel holds a 'God Drop' box.
- Leaders maintain the long-established programme of weekly Mass. The Friday morning Mass observed, which is well attended each week, was an oasis of calm for all those present.
- Leaders ensure the weekly assembly programme is linked to Lasallian principles, as evidenced by the inspiring assembly observed during the inspection.



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

- Members of the governing board review worship and liturgies. This is evident through the governing board minutes. Feedback through weekly meetings leads to the setting of actions and targets for continuous improvement and development.
- Members of the board regularly participate in and lead events enabling a thorough understanding of the Collective Worship provided. This is enhanced by the active role of the clergy as governors.
- Members of the senior and middle leadership teams are actively involved in leading worship and supporting Liturgical events.
- The chaplain monitors the use of prayer and worship and is actively involved in supporting the capability and confidence of others to extend their skills in delivering worship.
- Staff development assists all staff in a deep understanding of the Catholic Church. In addition to whole staff training, staff have regular access to professional development via the school deacon and weekly reflection meetings after school. Staff spoke overwhelmingly about the care, support and opportunities available for them to have a thorough understanding of what it means to work in a Catholic school.
- The school has a dedicated Lasallian Animator who helps promote Lasallian principles in all aspects of the school.
- School leaders ensure that staff briefings are an opportunity for staff to come together to reflect and join in prayer. Staff also spoke highly of opportunities for spiritual reflection.