

THE VALIDATION REPORT - SUMMARY



This report to the Bishop of the Diocese under Canon 806 of the Code of Canon Law is also the report to the governors of the school on religious education. For Catholic maintained schools, the report also fulfils the requirements of Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

NAME OF SCHOOL	Farnborough Hill
ADDRESS	Farnborough GU14 8AT
URN	116517
CHAIR OF GOVERNORS	Mr J Hull
HEADTEACHER	Mrs S Buckle
NAMES OF VALIDATORS	Ms R Olivier Mrs B Barrett-John
DATES OF THE VALIDATION VISIT	13 th , 23 rd & 24 th September 2013

Information about the school

Number of pupils on roll	557
Number of boys	0
Number of girls	557
Number of statemented pupils	1
Percentage of Catholic pupils	27
Number of teaching staff	67
Number of support staff	50
Percentage of Catholic staff	26

Farnborough Hill is an independent selective school for girls. It was founded on the teaching of the Catholic Church by the Sisters of the Institute of Christian Education in 1889. Although it is now managed by an independent trust, the ideals of the original founders are valued within the school and the Sisters are actively involved as members of the trust, governing body or support staff. It is situated in a historic building, with significant and well-designed new buildings. The house is the former home of the exiled Empress Eugenie, through whom there is a link to Farnborough Abbey. The school is fixed on the bedrock of the founding religious order's charism and continues to provide good Christian education for girls. Admission is by academic selective test. Some students travel quite long distances to attend the school. The majority of students are from white British or European heritage.

The school's effectiveness in providing Catholic education

- Farnborough Hill is a school based on Catholic tradition and works hard to be outstanding in this respect. Leadership and management of the school are excellent, with all key players focused on continual improvement of the school as a Catholic community. The school has many outreach schemes in place with the local community of schools.
- The excellent religious education (RE) department provides outstanding opportunities for learning and contributes to the development of students. It is a strongly successful core subject.
- Spiritual life is a key priority for school leaders. Opportunities for spiritual development are offered in a range of experiences, which many students and staff embrace. The chaplain and chaplaincy provision are excellent. Students' moral development is strong and they readily work cooperatively, valuing the opportunities offered to them.

a) Key strengths of the school

- Charism of the founding Sisters and their support in prayer;
- Full-time presence of the experienced chaplain, who is also a qualified school counsellor;
- How students value their school; their interaction with the wider community is substantial;
- Strength and expertise of the RE department and of the head of RE;
- The outstanding attainment and progress in RE;
- The excellent teaching in the RE department, which is always at least good with most judged outstanding;
- Support given by most staff to the ethos of the school;
- Commitment of the governors to preserving the Catholic nature of the school;
- The head, senior leaders and governors are committed to protecting the school's ethos and invest resources to promoting the religious life and spiritual development of all in the school community;
- Links with local clergy, especially with the parish priest, ensure that the Eucharist and other sacraments are celebrated in the school;
- Students' outstanding moral development.

b) Key areas for development

- Further strengthen the Catholic foundation of the school, by encouraging all to understand the Catholic source of its ethos; provide training for staff to support this;
- Develop further liturgical opportunities for more students to plan and lead prayer and worship;
- In the light of the requirement of the bishops' curriculum directory, the school should reconsider its time allocation for RE in key stage 3.

c) Progress since the last validation

The school is to be commended on its investment of the diocesan working group and their involvement in taking forward actions.

A chaplaincy team was started, but other approaches became more effective.

Actions still remaining from the previous validation:

The school continues to investigate opportunities for a staff retreat and to review RE time in light of bishops' curriculum directory.

d) Summary of parents' views of the school

Survey forms were not distributed to year 7. An unusually high percentage of parents, 69%, returned completed questionnaires to the validators.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. A minority of parents raised concerns about communication between home and school, including about information on progress in RE. In the view of the validators, the school provides information about school life and activities through its website and through ClarionCall. Parents receive information three times a year on their daughter's progress and attainment and there is an opportunity at least annually for parents to meet with teaching staff. Heads of year and senior staff are accessible for individual meetings.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR THE VALIDATION

As part of the validation process, two validators spent a morning in the school, meeting with the headteacher and head of RE, discussing the schools' self-review report, touring the school and gathering documentary evidence.

Two validators carried out the validation during two school days.

During the validation days interviews and discussion were held with:

- The headteacher;
- The chair of governors;
- The head of RE;
- The assistant head responsible for pastoral care, sex and relationships education and PSHE;
- The head of history;
- The bursar/clerk to the governors;
- The learning support coordinator;
- Members of the diocesan self-review group;
- The school council;
- An attached priest;
- The chaplain;
- The RE department

Seven religious education lessons were observed;

Two whole-school liturgies and two class prayers were observed;

A sample of students' religious education books and folders was scrutinised;

Religious education resources were seen;

Chaplaincy resources were seen;

An analysis was made of the responses to the parental questionnaire;

Informal discussions were held with students during the days;

Informal feedback was given to the headteacher, chair of governors, another governor and senior staff at the end of the second day.

Conclusion

The validators would like to thank the headteacher, staff and students for their welcome and for the open approach towards the validation process. They would also like to thank the RE department for their high level of cooperation and the chair of governors for his time.