

St Fidelis Catholic Primary School

Demonstrating a clear and thought-through vision for research

Fact File

School

St Fidelis Catholic Primary School

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Profile

St Fidelis Catholic Primary School is an above-average-sized primary school in the London Borough of Bexley. It was recognised as a good school with outstanding features by Ofsted in 2011 and as an outstanding school by the Diocese of Southwark. The school is firmly committed to its mission of compassion, challenge and excellence. All adults within the school understand their key role in supporting every child to fulfil their potential: academically, physically, morally and spiritually.

The school as an enquiring learning community

In recognition of its clear and thought-through vision for research, NFER has awarded St Fidelis Catholic Primary School the NFER Research Mark. St Fidelis has a rich history of being engaged with research and their work has been developed and refined over time.

There is a fundamental and integral relationship between research and the school's whole approach to improvement. St Fidelis has an expectation that all staff are engaged in research activity as a fundamental part of their professional development. Staff and even pupils judge research as important due to the status given to it by the headteacher and senior leadership team who model the important contribution research makes to the life of the school. A particularly

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impressive feature is the way in which the school's development plan is structured as a series of current, key research questions.

As a hub school, St Fidelis supports a range of primaries and secondaries, encouraging them to read, use and critique research. The school also has a well developed practice of teaching trios where teachers work together on identifying an aspect of their practice they wish to improve – linked to a learning need.

For St Fidelis, the evaluation stages and feedback given from the NFER Research Mark was something that they found particularly useful, especially in being able to highlight areas of continuous improvement, something that is of great importance to the school.

“The NFER Research Mark has played a central role in developing our senior leaders’ understanding of how to support teachers in their own critical evaluation of pedagogy” says Mark Hannon, the school’s Headteacher.

Improving teaching and learning

Enquiry and research are woven into the everyday teaching and practice of St Fidelis. Teachers are expected to be continually questioning and reflecting on their practice and to be researching an aspect of their pedagogy through joint professional development in the form of ‘teaching trios’. Research engagement feeds into the appraisal system where teachers demonstrate what they have learnt and how this has had an impact on children’s learning. The use of specialist teachers across the school for PE, music and art allows all teachers to devote time each week to research activity. A third of the teacher staff have or are engaged on Masters Programmes, with others also undertaking other enquiry-based qualifications.

Impact on pupils and young people



Pupils, as well as staff at St Fidelis are encouraged to take on research and pupils are able to explain in depth what growth mindsets are, how this relates to them and how they have been enabled to change and develop a more confident outlook. One pupil clearly demonstrated this by stating: “Sometimes I just did not feel like I wanted to learn more. So I wanted to stick to my ability instead of pushing myself further. I now stop doing that because I know that if I keep trying to stay at one point, I will never move further”. Another impressive feature is the way research is used with respect to the spiritual dimension of the school, based upon the principle that unless children are taught to question their faith then it will not be a well-grounded and secure faith.

NFER Comments

There is clear evidence of research that has been linked to improvement goals. St Fidelis has introduced a number of research initiatives, and pupils are given opportunities to take part in research activity, and research programmes have led to children being able to articulate their own learning.

How to apply for the NFER Research Mark

The NFER Research Mark is based on 10 criteria that are essential elements of a research-engaged school or college. Please visit www.nfer.ac.uk/resmark for details. To find out how else NFER can help with research in your school, visit www.nfer.ac.uk/ris



Evidence for Excellence in Education

This commentary has been approved by the organisation it is written about, in order to share understanding and experiences related to the NFER Research Mark. Other examples are available on: www.nfer.ac.uk/resmark

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