

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

School: St Bernard's Catholic Primary School

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School URN: 119449

Headteacher: Mrs Mia Barlow

Chair of Governors: Rev J Slater

Section 48 Inspector: Mrs J Hampson

Date of Inspection: 7th March 2013

The inspection report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Michael Campbell O.S.A., the Bishop of Lancaster (c.f. Code Canon Law, 804, 806), and for the Governing Body of the school (Education Act 2005, Section 48). The inspection reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school's witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

The inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Bernard’s is a smaller than average Catholic primary school, where pupil numbers are growing rapidly. There are 173 pupils on roll, of whom 103 are baptised Catholic, 31 are from other Christian denominations, 9 have other faith backgrounds and 30 pupils have no religious affiliation.

The majority of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils on the special needs register is broadly in line with national averages.

The school serves the parish of St Edmund Campion. At the end of year six, two thirds of children currently transfer to Our Lady’s Catholic High School in Preston.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll:	173
Planned Admission Number of Pupils:	30
Percentage of pupils baptised Catholics:	60%
Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations:	18%
Percentage of pupils from other faith backgrounds:	5%
Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation:	17%
Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups:	10%
Percentage of pupils with special needs:	16%

Staffing

Full-time teachers:	7
Part-time teachers:	0
Percentage of Catholic teachers:	85%
Percentage of teachers with CCRS:	70%

Percentage of learning time given to RE:

R	10%	Yr 4	10%
Yr 1	10%	Yr 5	10%
Yr 2	10%	Yr 6	10%
Yr 3	10%		

Parish served by the school:

St Edmund Campion

Overall Effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

MAIN FINDINGS

St Bernard’s is an outstanding Catholic school. The pursuit of excellence in all of the school’s activities has led to very good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in pupils’ progress and attainment in curriculum RE.

Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school. They are proud to be part of the school community and are proud of their achievements. They have extremely positive attitudes to learning and thoughtful engagement in lessons, along with excellent behaviour, is a significant factor in their excellent progress and attainment. From very low starting points, all children make very good progress in Religious Education and a high proportion, including those with additional needs, make more than expected progress. Attainment at the end of all key stages has improved over the last three years and by the end of Key Stage 2 is now high.

The school provides an excellent Catholic education. Teaching and learning in RE are outstanding, meeting the needs of all pupils and enabling them to make very good progress. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic Life of school and they benefit greatly from this. The level of pupil participation in prayer and in the liturgical life of the school is good; pupils respond with respect and reverence to Collective Worship. The promotion of spiritual and moral development in the school is also very good.

Leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The head teacher, who is also the RE subject leader, ensures a clear vision for this Catholic school is shared. The school motto ‘You are precious in my eyes’, forms the foundation of this loving, fully inclusive school. All leaders have a clear sense of direction in curriculum RE and are committed to raising standards.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school. One parent wrote of the ‘kindness, tolerance and care for all in school’ which is central to the life of the school.

The School's capacity for sustained improvement

All priorities for improvement since the last inspection have been addressed and have a positive impact on the school's work. Self-evaluation is grounded in thorough and accurate analysis. The head teacher, along with other leaders and managers, inspires the school community to work towards meeting ambitious targets. As a result, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is excellent.

What the school needs to do to improve further

1. Ensure the individual pupil targets, which are set by the head teacher, are communicated effectively to pupils across the whole school.
2. Continue to develop marking in RE, so that pupils in all key stages are aware of the next steps in their learning.

PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups

1

Pupils enjoy RE and speak enthusiastically about their learning. Those of other faith backgrounds speak of their enjoyment in learning about the Catholic faith and recognition of the impact on their daily lives, whilst at the same time being proud of their own backgrounds and beliefs. All pupils have a strong sense of personal worth and show an understanding of the importance of treating others with respect. One pupil in Year Two said, 'We feel like we are all part of one big family, part of God's family'.

Learning and progress in RE is excellent overall. Data shows that, from very low starting points, pupils, including those with additional needs, make very good progress in Foundation Stage and through Key Stages 1 and 2. There is little variation in the amount of progress made between boys and girls, Catholics and those other than Catholic.

Standards of attainment have risen in the last three years. From very low starting points, pupils make excellent progress and achieve standards which are broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are high. Samples of pupils' work in the moderated portfolio, which are externally moderated by diocesan colleagues, show that teachers' judgments are secure.

Current assessment information and pupils' work show that across the whole school, standards of attainment in both knowledge and understanding of religion (AT1) and the ability to reflect on meaning (AT2) are improving and are generally high.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic Life of school and they benefit greatly from this. They are able to speak with confidence about their understanding of the Catholic Life of the school and their engagement with it. Pupils of all faiths recognise the impact that the teachings of Jesus have on their daily lives and know that they are 'kind to each other and care for each other because Jesus told us'.

One Year Six pupil said, 'Even if bad things happen to us, we can remember that we are precious in God's eyes.'

Pupils regularly lead activities with a religious character, in the school and in the wider community. For example, they share liturgical celebrations, such as the stations of the cross, with the parish community.

Pupils take responsibility for helping those less fortunate than themselves. For example, some pupils organised a 'winter warmer', selling hot chocolate to raise money for Cafod. They also sponsor a child in The Gambia and fundraised for a water pump for a community in Malawi. They do this because they recognise that these people are 'our brothers and sisters in Christ.'

Acts of worship engage all pupils in St Bernard's School. Pupils act with reverence and are eager to participate in the many different types of worship offered by the school. Pupils have a good understanding of the religious seasons and are becoming skilled in the use of scripture, hymns and other forms of prayer. An observed act of Collective Worship in Key Stage 2 demonstrated that pupils are able to use music and prayer effectively to support reflection. They are at ease when praying with their faith community.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School

1

Leaders and managers promote Catholic values and principles well. The head teacher, who is also the RE subject leader, is relentless in her pursuit of excellence. Through her vision for every child to leave school with 'a love of God and a love of learning, so that they are ready for the challenges of life,' she works closely with the governors to drive improvements, ensuring all staff are guided and supported in helping all children achieve their potential.

Everyone in school is encouraged not to 'talk the talk, but walk the walk'. For example, pupils spoke of walking with Jesus in friendship.

Staff speak highly of the head teacher as someone who leads by example and bears witness to Christ every day in school. The impact of this is seen in pupils who speak of having 'the power to forgive others.'

School Improvement Plans, which include plans for RE, 'Fit for Mission' and the Year of Faith, set clear priorities for improvement. These plans are based on excellent analysis of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

The school's monitoring and evaluation procedures of provision for RE are good. The head teacher ensures that monitoring, assessment and tracking systems impact positively on pupils' learning, progress and standards. For example, evidence from monitoring shows that the introduction of more sustained RE lessons is improving the standard of pupils' recorded work.

Governors provide effective challenge and support to the school. They are very involved in the Catholic Life of the school and make a valuable contribution to its work. Governing body meetings include detailed reports from the head teacher on religious education, including pupil progress and attainment, as well as reviews of action plans and the role of the school in the wider community.

Governors demonstrate commitment to the Catholic mission of the school, through the high quality professional development opportunities they provide for staff, including Catholic leadership programmes and CCRS.

The school has developed a variety of partnership activities which impact positively on pupils' achievement and well-being and on the Catholic Life of the school. Governors work very closely with staff to ensure that links are strong with the parish, other Catholic schools, the Diocese and other organisations.

The promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. The head teacher has ensured that the inclusion of all is a central goal and a shared vision. The introduction of the sunshine room is a friendly way of welcoming all families into the school, including those who feel insecure in an academic environment, enabling them to borrow resources to support their child's learning.

There is a common sense of belonging amongst staff and pupils and all have a high regard for the Catholic Life of the school. Staff work effectively to ensure that the curriculum is planned to meet all pupils' needs and thus to ensure equal opportunity for all. Pupils' friendship bonds cross cultural, faith and social boundaries.

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

1

Evidence from monitoring carried out by the head teacher shows that the quality of teaching is at least good and much of it is outstanding. During inspection, all teaching observed was outstanding. A good range of teaching styles, excellent questioning techniques, clear explanations and very well paced lessons ensures that all pupils engage well and make very good progress in both attainment targets. Planning shows that teachers ensure there are differentiated activities which are carefully matched to the levels of attainment in curriculum RE.

Pupils enjoy RE lessons most when they use new technologies to optimise their learning, for example the internet to research religious people or to find scripture to support their point of view.

In a lesson observed in Key Stage 1, pupils demonstrated good knowledge and use of religious vocabulary when discussing their recent visit to church, for example, pulpit and chalice. The lesson was planned very carefully to build on prior learning, pupils' capabilities and pupils' questions. 'Steps to success' were used effectively to help children work toward the learning objective.

In a lesson observed in Key Stage 2, pupils were able to speak very confidently about their work on reconciliation, demonstrating an ability to draw on their knowledge of scripture to explain their answers to challenging questions.

The head teacher sets individual pupil targets for RE. These are highlighted in teachers' planning for RE. Leaders have identified in the improvement plan that communicating these targets more effectively to pupils would ensure more rapid progress.

A new marking policy has recently been introduced. Where teachers have fully implemented the policy, it is having a positive impact on pupil progress, as pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, a scrutiny of pupils' books showed that marking is less well-developed in some year groups. The head teacher has identified this as an area for further monitoring and evaluation in school.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding and ensures that the spiritual needs of all pupils are met.

The school engages parents exceptionally well in supporting the prayer life in school. From Reception class, parents are encouraged to help their child write a prayer in the prayer book when they bring the 'prayer lamb' home.

In an act of worship observed in Key Stage 1, pupils led a reflection based on a theme. They had prepared this at home with their families. Teachers' planning for acts of worship is good and acts of worship are fully inclusive and reflective. Careful planning allows for progression across the whole school, so that by the start of Key Stage 2, pupils are becoming confident in selecting scripture linked to themes. They do this well and show a good understanding of the liturgical year in their planning.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1 **Outstanding**

Grade 2 **Good**

Grade 3 **Satisfactory**

Grade 4 **Unsatisfactory**

Overall effectiveness	1
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	1
PUPILS How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups	1
• how well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education?	1
❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
❖ pupils' attainment in RE	1
• to what extent do pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school?	1
• how well do pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship?	1
LEADERS AND MANAGERS How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic Life of the School?	1
• how well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils?	1
• how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for RE and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils?	2
• the extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met?	2
• how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well being?	1
• how effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion?	1
PROVISION How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?	1
• the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education?	1
• the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education?	2
• the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs?	1
• the quality of Collective Worship provided by the school?	1