

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Bernard's is a smaller than average sized voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parish of St Ethelbert. The indicative admission number is currently 30, which has risen since the previous inspection. There are 168 pupils on roll of which 120 are baptized Catholics. The school is located on the Ladybridge housing estate approximately 2 miles from Bolton town centre. This is a relatively affluent area of Bolton with the majority of housing being privately owned. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage; 4% of pupils speak English as an additional language. 13% of the children are entitled to Free School Meals which is significantly lower than the national average. Attainment of children on entry to the Reception class is in line with national average. The school meets the government's current floor standard, with a significant number of pupils making greater than expected progress. The school is lower than national average with regards to the number of pupils with special needs and disabilities, although the number of pupils with a statutory statement of special needs is in line with other schools nationally. Six of the seven teachers are Catholic. Strong partnerships are established with St Ethelbert Primary School, Beaumont Primary School and St Joseph's RC High School.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS GOOD

St Bernard's is a good Catholic primary school with a range of outstanding features. The dedicated Headteacher is energised by the task of leading this school and is an inspiration for the whole community. Leadership, including governors, places Religious Education at the heart of the curriculum and the school's Mission Statement is clearly evident in policy and practice. The governors are supportive, challenging and committed to their leadership role. Teaching of Religious Education is good, so pupils learn quickly and they demonstrate secure subject knowledge. There is clear evidence that the Word of God informing teaching and learning, although teaching and assessment is not yet outstanding. Monitoring of Religious Education has ensured that there has been significant improvements in achievement and progress. The welcome parents receive is exemplary. 'The Orchard Group' is hugely successful in meeting the needs of vulnerable and SEND pupils. Support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is outstanding. The whole community clearly demonstrates outstanding witness to the church's mission in education. Pupils are involved in leading prayer and worship activities, including the school Chaplaincy Team, but more could be done to promote silent prayer and meditation. The Parish Priest makes a significant contribution to school life. Opportunities for the parish community to celebrate together are prioritised. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is fully embedded across all areas of the curriculum.

KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The spiritual leadership of the Headteacher, alongside the Governors, is outstanding. Staff and governors share a collective vision and demonstrate a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education.
- Relationships, behaviour and care for all within the school is outstanding.
- Staff and pupils feel confident and secure in witnessing to the beliefs and values of the Catholic community and actively promote partnership with the parish.
- The learning environment is outstanding. Displays, prayer corners and the classroom climate, promotes the pupils' spirituality and the Word of God exceptionally well.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The dedicated Headteacher is energised by the task of leading this school and is an inspiration for the whole community. Leadership, including the Governing Body, places Religious Education at the heart of the curriculum and the school's Mission Statement is clearly evident in policy and practice. The Governing Body are extremely pro-active and committed to continual school improvement and their own effectiveness. They are a visible presence in the school and frequently undertake monitoring activities alongside the senior leadership team in order to extend their knowledge of the school. The Senior Leadership Team have rigorous

systems in place to track pupils' progress and celebrate their successes. Self-evaluation of the school's work at all levels is a coherent and accurate reflection of rigorous monitoring, self-analysis and challenge. Religious Education and the spiritual life of the school are prioritised in the School Improvement Plan and Headteacher's reports to governors. Alongside the Senior Leadership Team, the Religious Education Subject Leader has ensured that there has been improvements in Religious Education and although she has participated in monitoring activities this could be extended. The Parish Priest is fully involved in the religious life of the school and visits regularly, going into the classrooms and talking to the children. The sacramental programme is delivered by catechists from the parish; the school is very supportive and staff attend all the sacramental celebrations in the parish. All members of the school staff are committed to the parish and the local community. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is fully embedded across all areas of the curriculum.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS GOOD

The quality of teaching in Religious Education is good, with some outstanding features, leading to good achievement overall. Lessons are effectively planned and organised; and activities are differentiated in order to match the capabilities of all pupils. Assessment is used to inform planning and secure improvement in pupils' learning, but more could be done to standardise assessment judgements. Pupils are challenged by creative, practical and collaborative learning activities; to which they respond positively. Pupils are confident when talking about God and their faith and they are keen to learn more and achieve well. They have a good knowledge of scripture and how to use bibles, although more could be done to extend their religious vocabulary. Teachers skilfully ask questions to check pupils' understanding and to encourage pupils to reflect on their learning. Teaching Assistants are effectively deployed to support the learning. Marking is having an impact on progress, but this could be further improved by ensuring consistency across the school. Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education was clearly evident across the curriculum. World religions are taught as part of the Religious Education curriculum and this helps children to understand and respect the beliefs and culture of others. Frequent visits to the school by religious and community groups enhances the RE curriculum, including Father Duncan's visits, in addition to educational trips. The school prioritises Religious Education on its professional development programme and teachers are supported by the school leadership team to extend their subject knowledge. The school subscribes to the 'Wednesday Word' and this is distributed to all families weekly.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

Jesus Christ is at the heart of this inclusive and caring school. Parents, pupils and staff are extremely complimentary about the welcome and family ethos. All members of the school community including parents feel a sense of belonging and contribute to the school community. The school reaches out to vulnerable members of the school community and they work extremely hard to ensure all pupils achieve their full potential. The pupils' sense of ownership and responsibility for what happens in their school is outstanding. They are given a high level of responsibility including: School Council, Chaplaincy Team, House Captains, Reading Partners and Buddy systems. The school actively seeks to engage with and support all members of the wider community. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in school life and there is a thriving PSA. Members of the parish and local community share in the life of the school and Father Duncan is an active member of the community. All members of staff demonstrate a keen sense of community affiliation and the quality of relationships exemplifies respect for all members of the school community. Effective systems are in place for inducting pupils into school and supporting them during their first year. Links with partner schools, including the Catholic High, are having a positive impact on standards and continuity of Catholic Education within the locality.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

The staff and pupils demonstrate a very high level of respect for, care of and service to others. Behaviour in the classrooms and around the school is outstanding. Effective systems are in place for the safeguarding of children. Pupils are confident that if they have any problems they can speak to a member of staff and that

any problems will be dealt with sympathetically. Pupils know what to do if they have worries and all felt bullying was not an issue because of the clear procedures in place. Parents were extremely complimentary about the support they receive from all members of staff. 'The Orchard Group' is hugely successful in meeting the needs of vulnerable and SEND pupils. Pupils receive a comprehensive SRE programme, which is currently being reviewed by the SLT alongside other Catholic schools in the locality. Teachers are approachable and parents feel able to talk with them about issues that concern them and their concerns are dealt with effectively. The quality of transition and induction are such that all children quickly feel part of the school community and cared for by those around them. Parents were extremely appreciative of all the activities that take place after school.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS GOOD

The spiritual life of the children is held in high regard with children afforded opportunities every day to be involved in prayer. Teachers and pupils are confident at planning and leading prayer and worship. Each class has its own way of collating children's prayers and recording them in a prayer book. Prayer books are taken into assembly to be used by staff and pupils. Whole school assemblies reflect on personal faith, moral issues, festivals, special occasions and other religions and cultures. During the inspection, the Chaplaincy Team supported the Headteacher in the assembly to explore "what is quality"; using a box of 'Quality Street' chocolates to illustrate the message. Throughout this interactive assembly, pupils demonstrated knowledge, enjoyment, respect for others and engagement. The Headteacher encouraged the children to reflect on the message as they journey through Lent. Everyone enjoyed praising God through their singing and actions. The pupils have developed a good knowledge of traditional prayers. Pupil Chaplains are providing different prayer opportunities linked to the Liturgical calendar, such as Rosary in October and May. The act of worship in the classroom was child focused and led. The organisation and implementation of this activity was excellent and resulted in a deeply spiritual experience. However, greater opportunity for silent reflective and meditative prayer will enable pupils to pray to God using their own words or thoughts. Classroom prayer corners and displays are attractive, thoughtful and creative; include scripture quotes for reflection. Pupils across the school made a life sized mosaic cross which is now situated in the hall and it has been blessed by Father Duncan. There are a variety of links and opportunities for involving families and the parish in school assemblies and masses. The termly Youth Masses in church, together with St Ethelbert's School, are very well attended by pupils, families and parishioners.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

The staff and pupils feel confident and secure in witnessing to the beliefs and are extremely active in sharing their faith within their community. Strong links have been developed with the parish and Father Duncan is a frequent visitor. The staff place pupils' at the centre of the school's Mission and encourage them to reach out to those in need. All pupils are involved in fundraising activities and the work of charities such as CAFOD, Urban Outreach Bolton and CARITAS are fully supported. In Years 5 and 6, pupils organise an enterprise event to raise money for charity. Observations showed that children treated each other with respect, care, patience, concern and with dignity and there is an emphasis on creating a pleasant working environment for everyone in school. Relationships are excellent between all members of the community and pupils are not afraid to talk about their faith. Gospel values are clearly evidenced throughout all policies and procedures and have a significant impact on school life. A strong sense of belonging to the school community exists and all members of the school feel valued and cared for. The Chaplaincy Team is well resourced and it is having a positive impact on the spiritual life of the school. They attended a Pupil Chaplain Retreat Day with other Catholic schools in the local area in order to generate further initiatives and to strengthen their skills. Adults in the school actively promote the school's mission, values and partnership with the parish. Staff and pupils clearly demonstrate witness to justice, compassion, reconciliation, love and forgiveness.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- To ensure assessment is having a positive impact on standards and is effectively moderated.

- To continue to develop best practice in marking by ensuring improvement comments impact on the children's learning and are consistently applied across the school.
- To develop reflective and meditative prayer. For pupils to be nurtured and developed in prayer in a spirit of listening to the 'still, small voice within'.

Wednesday 4th March 2015

Dear Pupils

Thank you so much for the wonderful welcome you gave us when we came to visit you. We really enjoyed learning about all the wonderful things you do at St Bernard's. You and your teachers are working so hard to always do your very best and as a result your school is good.

We know that you are very proud of your caring school and your Religious Education workbooks. Continue to look after each other and help those in need around you through all the charities you support. Your behaviour in the classroom and around school is outstanding.

We enjoyed being part of your lessons and were sorry not to see everyone. Your work is of a very good standard and we could clearly see that you have good knowledge of the bible and the sacraments. Thank you for showing us so much of what you have been doing. We have asked teachers to continue to helping you through marking and assessment of your work.

It was wonderful to see how you participated in Collective Worship and prayer. The Chaplaincy Team are doing a wonderful job helping you in school. We have asked your teachers to give you more opportunities for meditation, imaginative and silent prayer, so you listen and talk to God in your own way.

God bless you all.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Susan Gedzielewski and Mr Brendan Hennessy
(Section 48 Inspectors)

Summary Report to Parents

On 4th March 2015 the school was inspected in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The full report has been made available to the school and can also be accessed via both the school website and the Education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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