



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

BISHOP PARKER SCHOOL

Hunter Drive, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK2 3BT

DfE School No: 826/337
URN: 110481

Headteacher Teacher: Robert Mundy
Chair of Governors: Cathy Stormonth

Reporting Inspector: John Shinkwin
Associate Inspector: Pamela Brannigan

Dates of Inspection: 1 May 2018
Date Report Issued: 6 June 2018

Date of previous Inspection: 4 July 2012

The School is one of two schools in the Bletchley Catholic Schools Federation

Information about the school

Bishop Parker Catholic School is a one-form primary school with a nursery situated in Bletchley. The school is one of two schools in the Bletchley Catholic Schools Federation with the same Executive Headteacher and Governing Body and a shared nursery, serving the parish of St Thomas Aquinas and neighbouring socially disadvantaged areas in Milton Keynes. There are 218 children on roll of whom 144 (66%) are Catholic. The school also has a similar percentage of Catholic members of staff, one of whom has a Postgraduate Certificate in School Leadership and one CCRS. The levels of skills and aptitudes of many of the children when they join Nursery are below those typically expected for their age. The school community is enriched by pupils from ethnic minorities.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires Improvement 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

Bishop Parker is a very good Catholic school on an upward trajectory. The Executive Headteacher, his leadership team, Chaplaincy Leader and the Governors are highly effective in promoting the Catholic life of the school. Prayer is an integral part of the school's daily life and is central to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. There is a calm purposefulness in which pupils and staff work collaboratively with mutual respect; the children feel loved, well supported and safe within this community enabling those of all abilities and needs to thrive. There are outstanding teachers in this school who are supporting less experienced teachers as the school strives for consistent excellence. The school is benefiting greatly from its federation with St Thomas Aquinas School which will be further enhanced by the appointment of an Executive Deputy Headteacher in September 2018.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

Since the last inspection, the school has put in place a sophisticated system of tracking progress in RE and other core subjects; this is helping monitoring the progress of pupils across the range of ability. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Federation Governors are deeply committed to excellence in Catholic education; they thoroughly review initiatives and evaluate their impact on pupil progress. The school has sought and benefited from excellent proactive support from NORES. Progress towards the goals set out in the school development plan is regularly reviewed most especially in an away day for the leadership team and governors in the summer term. Whilst there is very good practice in the school, the setting of clear targets for pupils to improve their work and allow them time to respond to comments is not yet consistent across the school. It should be noted that three new teachers have started this year. The new Executive Deputy Headteacher will address the inconsistency as well as introducing and embedding a new assessment system and improving the induction of new teachers and support staff.

Since the current Executive Headteacher arrived, a carefully considered plan to reshape and re-orientate the school has been enacted. This has transformed the environment especially creating good-sized, light teaching spaces including an attractive library which has had a huge impact on school life. The vision of leaders and governors to make this an excellent Catholic school and the ability to convert plans into reality is apparent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend pupils involvement in the planning and leading of worship and other Chaplaincy activities to younger year groups.
- Develop consistency in the application of the Marking Policy with clear guidance on how improvement can be made
- Include in the Religious Education monitoring system a record of how teachers could progress to a higher standard.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 2

The children feel privileged to be part of this loving school community and are attracted by the Gospel teaching which is made meaningful to them by the staff. The children embraced the Pope's message on care of the environment in 'Laudato Si' and engaged enthusiastically with CAFOD 'Live Simply' challenges and continue to put them into practice. They learn to live out their faith e.g. Year 6 children visit Linden's Care Home which is tremendously beneficial to the residents and children alike. During these visits the children show residents examples of their work and the children and residents share stories of family life and play games together. They show compassion and understanding when some residents occasionally became confused or upset. They also volunteer to help the youngest classes to play positively at lunch and break time; they organise events to raise money for charities. The Year 5 residential retreat at St Cassian's is an important landmark in their faith and personal development.

The pupils respond whole-heartedly to the prayer life through the week from the reflective Executive Headteacher's Monday assembly based on the Sunday Gospel, in which they engaged well, the songs and psalms of Thursday assemblies, meditation and pupil-led class prayers through to the celebration assembly on Fridays. There are monthly class assemblies and the school leads two Masses each year at St Thomas Aquinas Church, which are well supported by parents. There is a spirit of joy in the children's singing, aided by the musical talents of the Chaplaincy Leader, who leads the school in spontaneous prayer, where children have the opportunity to ask the school community to pray for different intentions. Year 6 pupils lead the planning of Morning Prayer and especially their Leavers' Mass in July.

Pupils enjoy their work in RE lessons and their behaviour is very good - this is especially evident for the senior teachers, who model outstanding practice and challenge and extend the pupils' understanding, making the work relevant to their lives outside school, e.g. Fair Trade. In almost all year groups pupils' workbooks are well presented showing good coverage of "Come and See" aided by worksheets. In the best classes, there is a range of types of writing with developmental marking pointing the way to further improvement.

Although 66% of children are baptised Catholics, a high percentage of pupils enter the school with little or no knowledge of the Catholic faith. However analysis of teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 1 indicates that most pupils are working securely at age-related expectations in RE, with several pupils exceeding expectations. By the end of Year 6, pupils' progress is at least good. The vast majority demonstrates a strong moral purpose and Christian values. They are able to talk confidently and respectfully about the beliefs of others, particularly those of their peers. SEN, EAL and Pupil Premium children's achievement is in line with or above their general attainment in RE.

The Executive Headteacher and his leadership team are very focussed on raising all standards in this Catholic school to outstanding, like its sister school, and are progressing well towards this aim; by the people they are and by how they teach - they live their faith and communicate it to the children. They care deeply for each child and are methodical in tracking progress and being attentive to needs. Events like the Day of Reflection which was led by NORES, helped all staff reflect on the Catholic mission of the school. New staff are well supported and there is a continual striving to improve their induction so that they understand what it means to teach in a Catholic school. The children were involved in a review of school uniform including the school logo – inspired by a Walsingham Slipper Chapel stained glass window, there is now 'Leo', a lion, reaching up to Christ. This symbolism is a well understood message – the school community, like the lion, are reaching up to Christ. A vision meal with all stakeholders is planned as part of a review of the Mission Statement.

The Religious Education teaching and pupils' work are monitored but it would be more helpful if a record was kept of how teachers could develop their skills. Pupils' written work is heavily dependent on attractively presented worksheets – it is good teamwork that new teachers use material prepared by their more experienced colleagues but as they gain experience, they need to develop their own style. The Religious Education Lead attends all diocesan training and keeps up to date with new initiatives.

There are high expectations of the governors, who have a deep interest in and commitment to the school. Individual governors take responsibility for monitoring curriculum areas across both schools and report back to the full Board. The governor for Religious Education, the Parish Priest, makes an important contribution to the articulation of the school's vision and gives effective support to staff. There is an effective committee structure including *Curriculum and Standards* which includes Catholic Life Development and is part of the school's effective tracking of pupil progress; another is responsible for the Executive Headteacher's performance management. There is an annual away day when the School Development Plan is analysed and updated by SLT and governors, who are knowledgeable and in touch with school life.

Since two members of SLT are active members, there are very strong links with the Parish. Sacramental preparation takes place in school from September to May of Year 3 led by staff and all attend the First Holy Communion which pupils make as a year group at Saturday morning Masses. The Executive Headteacher and RE Coordinator are active in the MK Catholic Schools Cluster. There is strong commitment to local and international charities like foodbanks and CAFOD. In a recent survey with 124 responses, parents and carers expressed a very high degree of satisfaction with all aspects of the Catholic life of the school; an inspector met a group of parents who endorsed this view enthusiastically; they particularly appreciated the alacrity of response of the school to any issues that arose. Pupils were warm in their praise for their experience of school; a Muslim girl, who started in Year 6, enthused about how she was welcomed by the community. The learning about other faiths engenders an appreciation and respect so it is no surprise that friendships cross cultural and ethnic boundaries.

Prayer is central to the life of the school, beginning with the staff who start their week with prayer and reflection on scripture. An effective chaplaincy team is being developed to co-ordinate worship, take responsibility for classroom displays and communication with the clergy and parish workers. It is planned to extend membership of this group to pupils which will both give children valuable leadership opportunities and ensure that chaplaincy work is better tuned to the needs of pupils, which is already very good. The quality of displays around the school is a powerful reminder of God's active presence in school life and expresses gratitude for blessings received. Children of other faiths are well supported and feel very comfortable within this community. The Chaplaincy Team prepare Year 3 pupils for the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion working closely with the parish. A member of the Chaplaincy Team is the leader of the Pastoral Support and Rainbows group, who organises one to one and group sessions for vulnerable children.

There is a variety of teaching styles with the quality ranging from satisfactory to outstanding and is good overall. The outstanding teaching is very well planned, has careful questioning to promote deeper understanding and is very motivating for the children. In a lesson on the coming of the Holy Spirit, the pupils offered interesting suggestions for a Concepts Wall justifying them with reference to the text. The faith and personal conviction of the experienced teachers shone through; inexperienced teachers covered the material using worksheets – they are being helped with training on teaching RE in a Catholic school. TAs give effective support particularly for EAL and SEN pupils.

Teachers deliver the Come and See curriculum in relevant, creative and dynamic ways, including through the use of ICT, drama, art and music. This is supplemented by work on the school mission statement, liturgical seasons, bible study, the saints, Sunday readings and prayer. With 10% of teaching time devoted to RE and a generous allocation of resources, the provision is strong. The school devotes time each year to learning about other faiths and plans to increase opportunities for developing knowledge with more visits to places of worship and meeting and engaging with people of other faith backgrounds.

Target setting is used to foster progress and give the pupils a sense of the headway they are making. Assessment of attainment is recorded in a visually attractive software which teachers build on from year to year; this informs planning, enabling differentiated work to be set to meet the needs of the various ability groups within the class. This is monitored by the RE Co-ordinator who provides support, development and evaluation of teaching and learning through school INSET.

The inspectors would like to express their thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.