



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

BIRCHLEY ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY

BILLINGE

Inspection Date	15 October 2014
Inspectors	Mrs Marie Connolly Mrs Angela Williams
Unique Reference Number	104813

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

Type of School	Catholic Primary
Age range of pupils	4-11
Number on roll	206
Chair of Governors	Mr Wayne Leatherbarrow
Headteacher	Mrs Claire Cropper
School address	Birchley Road Billinge Lancashire WN5 7QJ
Telephone number	01744 678610
E-mail address	stmaryrcpb@sthelens.org.uk
Date of last inspection	20 January 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about this school

- Birchley St Mary's Catholic Primary school is an average sized Catholic Primary School situated in Billinge Lancashire serving the parish of the same name.
- There are 206 children on roll of whom 190 are baptised Catholic, 11 come from other Christian denominations, and there are no children from other faith or religious traditions. Five children have no religious affiliation.
- There are 12 teachers 7 of whom teach Religious Education. Seven have a suitable qualification in Religious Education. Eight teachers are baptised Catholic.
- Since the last inspection the same headteacher (who is also the Religious Education subject leader) has remained in post. She divides her time between this school and another where she is executive head. A new chair of governors has been appointed and the parish priest who was the previous chair is link governor for Religious Education.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

Overall effectiveness:

Birchley St Mary's is an outstanding school in providing Catholic Education.

Inspection Judgements

The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.

- The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.
- Pupils know and understand the school's Mission Statement and understand the part they play within it from their earliest years. They are regularly involved in its evaluation in a variety of contexts, e.g. during assemblies, at school council meetings etc. This along with the motto '*to be the best we can be*' and the core values of respect, integrity, nurturing, passion and creativity very clearly underpin every aspect of this truly outstanding school.
These values are put into practice in innumerable ways daily. Many most creative three dimensional displays evidence this. Everyone understands their contribution to living the mission and feel they have a voice. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to the school community and a belief in themselves. They value and respect each other.
- Pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility in the school and wider community e.g. School Council, prayer leaders, buddies, lunchtime buddies, monitors play leaders etc. They are actively involved in developing the Catholic character of the school through the school council meetings, planning and leading Collective Worship and general decision making opportunities. Pupils are enthusiastic about their work and are encouraged to have 'a voice'. They spoke well about all that is good in their school and the part they play in this e.g. involvement in the local community sports and quiz teams, involvement in Billinge Young Singers, the Remembrance celebration and their part in fundraising for many local, national and international charities.
- Pupils benefit from and enjoy participation in visits to places of cultural interest e.g. The Jewish museum and the Hindu temple.
- Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong and apply this in their personal relationships. They take an increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions. Many strategies are in place that support this e.g. buddies, play leaders, class monitors etc. Pastoral care and relationships at every level are outstanding. Behaviour is outstanding.
- Children praise and acknowledge the contribution of others. They show a readiness to embrace and celebrate their lived experiences.
- Pupils embrace opportunities to meet their potential in all aspects of school life. Display in the Foyer and all around the school affirms and reinforces the importance of this. Music is a strength of the school. Children learn to play a variety of instruments e.g. flute and guitar and use them to accompany Collective Worship and services as well as performances.
- Pupils are involved in service to the local faith and religious communities. They sing and take part in a number of liturgical activities. They show respect and understanding of other faiths and religions. Events are held in school to help children's understanding of cultural diversity. Senior management has been keen to develop greater opportunities to do this because of limited cultural diversity in the locality.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Pupils' achievements and enjoyment in Religious Education is outstanding.
- Their attainment in Religious Education is very good and continues to improve.
- They make very good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities.
- On entry to school many children have a limited knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.
- There is no difference in performance between pupils of different gender.
- Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are very good. They are supported well by some differentiation of tasks and excellent additional support staff. Greater differentiation by task as observed on the day of inspection will help raise attainment higher.
- Analysis of assessments undertaken provides evidence of pupils generally attaining appropriate level or above for their age and stage of development in each key stage. This trend is improving as indicated on class tracking.
- Pupils are becoming increasingly more religiously literate. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developing appropriate to their age or capacity. Some excellent and beautifully presented work of a high standard can be seen in workbooks.
- They are developing the skills that enable them to reflect spiritually, think ethically and theologically and are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.
- The development of pupil's skills is enhanced greatly by the work undertaken in Collective Worship.
- Pupils' engagement in and enjoyment of their learning is outstanding as shown by their interest, enthusiasm and behaviour.
- Pupils are encouraged to work well independently and collaboratively. Many creative tasks are provided to enable this and are to be seen in workbooks as well as on the day of inspection.
- Pupils are anxious to learn and improve their knowledge, understanding and skills as they become independent learners. There is a real excitement when undertaking tasks from their earliest years.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

- Pupils' response to and participation in Collective Worship is outstanding.
- They show interest, respond well and actively participate in Collective Worship. The Acts of Worship observed on the day of inspection were spiritually uplifting.
- Children act with reverence and are keen to participate in a variety of gatherings – liturgies, assemblies and Collective Worship e.g. playing music, reading, role play etc.
- Pupils' knowledge of prayer and liturgy is increasing.
- They become familiar with a variety of prayer styles. They appreciate and are open to the Word of God in the scriptures.
- They sing joyfully, sometimes with actions, reflect in silence and join in community prayers appropriately and with confidence.
- They are becoming more confident preparing and leading worship from their earliest years. They are provided with resources to support this. Reception children were seen having great fun setting up a focus for worship and Year six created their own PowerPoint presentation to support the theme of 'Harvest for the World' This is excellent.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education overall is outstanding.
- It is consistently effective in ensuring that pupils are interested and engaged and make outstanding progress.
- Teachers display good subject knowledge and deploy a wide range of teaching styles to motivate and inspire pupils. Teachers have become more confident in the planning and delivery of *Come and See*. The parish priest who is also link governor for Religious Education is most willing to support teachers further develop their knowledge of the scriptures used in *Come and See*.
- Those teachers without a suitable qualification in Religious Education are encouraged to undertake the *Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies*.
- Teaching encourages pupils' enjoyment of and enthusiasm for Religious Education e.g. the use of role play, Information Communication Technology (ICT), music, and PowerPoint on the day of inspection engaged pupils with the concepts most creatively. Parents are also enabled to share this online through 'Purple Mash'.
- Teachers have started to take into account pupils' prior learning and provide some differentiated tasks when planning so that the work consolidates, builds and extends their knowledge and understanding. Wider differentiation by task consistently will support this further.
- Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively. Good use is made of time and resources including other adults and Information and Communication Technology to maximise learning. Excellent use of ICT was observed on the day of inspection.
- Pupils are informed of their progress and how to improve both orally and through marking. Continuing the development of 'next steps' marking and use of the 'driver words will give refinement and rigour to this. This should be undertaken consistently throughout the school. A wide variety of strategies are employed that celebrate and affirm effort and achievement.
- The assessment of pupil's work in Religious Education is very good.
- The school has good assessment strategies which provide accurate and detailed information on the achievement of all the pupils. These show attainment is generally improving. This information is shared with governors.
- Teachers are able to identify how well pupils are achieving and tackle underachievement.
- Teachers enable pupils to evaluate their own work during plenary sessions. Greater use of the driver words in plenary sessions will support this further.

The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils' learning

- The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupil's learning is outstanding.
- The school using the *Come and See* programme recommended by the Archdiocese meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. Appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets National and Archdiocesan requirements.
- Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales.
- Planning ensures full coverage of the Religious Education programme. Many imaginative and well planned strategies are deployed to enrich pupils' learning.

- The school implements new curriculum developments as appropriate.
- Enrichment activities such as role play, use of art, music, dance and ICT etc all have a positive impact on the curriculum. It would be good for there to be less reliance on worksheets in some classes.
- The Religious Education curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral development and vocation. The parish priest was interviewed regarding his vocation as part of a previous topic
- The curriculum is customised to meet the needs of groups and individuals.
- Children have explored the beliefs and values of other faiths and religions. They have made visits to the Jewish Museum and the Hindu temple and invite people of other religious beliefs into school. This helps to promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently. This has been a priority for the leadership team as there is limited cultural diversity in the local area.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding. It truly reflects the Catholic character of the school and takes into account the limited variety of faith backgrounds among the pupils.
- Collective Worship has an extremely high profile and is central to the life of the school. Many important feasts and seasons are marked through worship throughout the year.
- Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of staff and pupils. Opportunities are provided to enable full, active and conscious participation of the whole school community.
- Children are enabled to pray formally and informally using a variety of prayer methods and styles. Their knowledge of different forms of prayer is good and developing. They are becoming more able to reflect silently in response to the Word. This could be developed further.
- The school provides opportunities for staff and children to develop the skills in planning, leading and evaluating Collective Worship. This has been an area of ongoing development.
- The teachers provide the necessary resources and opportunities to help children to develop the skills necessary to plan, lead and participate in Collective Worship and to evaluate it effectively. The ongoing development and use of these will raise the profile even further.
- Opportunities are provided for parents, carers the local faith communities to participate in a variety of celebrations of the *Come and See* programme and the Church's liturgical year. This is greatly appreciated. It would also be good to invite parents occasionally to 'stay and pray' on a more informal basis.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in promoting monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic life of the school and in the way they plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.
- This is reflected in the school's own Mission Statement, motto and core values. All who form part of the school community including parents, clergy, governors and children were involved in the development of the Mission Statement.

- The Mission and the values underpinning it are clearly and explicitly lived out daily and the staff and children reflect regularly on the many ways in which they endeavour 'to be the best they can be'. In this way the school evaluates its effectiveness.
- Leaders, governors and managers use monitoring data to evaluate the schools performance, celebrate, and plan future improvements. Outstanding opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in the Catholic life and Mission of the school e.g. services, times of reflection and fundraising. They know, own and live out their Mission Statement.
- The Self Evaluation Document provides evidence of the schools monitoring, searching analysis and self challenge. Their analysis truthfully and very honestly provides a basis to celebrate the school's strengths and outlines clearly areas for development e.g. the development of an area for prayer and reflection.
- The quality and accuracy of the Self Evaluation Document is good in sharing the schools strengths and vision for its Catholic life.
- The school provides very good induction and in-service training to enable staff to further understand the Church's Mission in Education and play their unique part in it, e.g. attendance at Archdiocesan courses and staff meetings. It also encourages those without a qualification in Religious Education to undertake the *Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies*.
- The quality of Collective Worship is a strength of the school. It is effectively monitored and evaluated by leaders, governors and managers. An up to date policy is in place.
- A range of opportunities for spiritual and moral developments are provided for staff and pupils.
- Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all.
- Prayer, worship and the liturgical life of the school reflects and respects the limited religious diversity within the school.
- There are positive relationships at every level within the school. There is real team spirit where all are mutually supported.
- Parents are consulted regularly and involved in a variety of ways in the life of the school e.g. through newsletters, questionnaires invitations to services and celebrations etc.
- Governors are outstanding in fulfilling their responsibilities. They have effectively helped shape the direction of the school through regular visits, extensive communication, joint initiatives and shared celebrations. The parish priest who is link governor for Religious Education is a regular visitor to school. He and the chair of governors provide considerable support to the headteacher which is greatly appreciated.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Religious Education of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in promoting monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Religious Education of the school and in the way they plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.
- Monitoring data is used effectively to evaluate the schools performance and plan for future improvements.
- There is a robust programme for the monitoring and evaluation cycle. The headteacher supported by the leadership team and parish priest are rigorous in ensuring advice is given and acted upon.
- Teaching and learning and Collective Worship is monitored most effectively regularly and appropriate feedback and support given as necessary. Good practice is shared and celebrated.

- Continuing professional development opportunities are provided for all. The school benefits from working closely with other local schools for moderation and other issues concerning Religious Education.
- Assessment information is collated and tracked by the subject leader and shared with governors and parents.
- Formal assessment tasks are undertaken in line with Archdiocesan guidance. The tasks set are checked by the subject leader and moderated afterwards.
- The headteacher as subject leader is outstanding in guiding Religious Education. She shows real integrity, a commitment to and a passion for her role. Staff respond well to her guidance. She introduces new initiatives when appropriate. Good and extensive documentation guides and directs all staff in the delivery of the subject. This is updated as necessary.
- The Self Evaluation Document and all self evaluation undertaken is excellent in identifying targets, timescales and lines of accountability.
- Curriculum outlines and newsletters are provided for parents who are consulted on a variety of issues depending on the work being covered.
- Achievement and effort are celebrated in many ways. Children's extensive and creative work is displayed beautifully throughout the school for all to see. Photographic evidence and portfolios help share the excellent work produced by staff and children with parents, governors and the whole school community.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

- Ensure even greater consistency in teaching throughout the school and raise attainment standards higher by continuing to embed recently implemented strategies including:
 - the new format for planning;
 - differentiation following evaluation and assessment;
 - the use of plenary sessions at the end of lessons using driver words;
 - refining marking with the key focus on driver words and next steps.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	1
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OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education	1
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	1

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders, governors and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, Grade 2 good, Grade 3 requires improvement and Grade 4 inadequate