

# St Bernadette Catholic Primary School

Walsingham Way, London Colney, AL2 1NL

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 22 February 2017



## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### A. Classroom religious education is good

- The school provides a well-structured curriculum in religious education that includes teaching about other faiths.
- Pupils get a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Both the Nursery and Reception classes provide a stimulating learning environment for young children at the beginning of their school life.
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons is mostly good and especially so when tasks are matched to their abilities.
- Teaching across the school was judged to be good overall but varied from causing concern to outstanding aspects seen in two key classes.
- Pupils' response to questions is good and their religious literacy shows good features in their verbal responses.
- The religious education subject leader has some good plans for the future development of both the curriculum and assessment.
- The leadership of religious education is committed to raising standards of written work and attainment in religious education.

### Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- The curriculum lacks creativity and also depth for higher ability pupils to achieve their full potential.
- The standard of written work requires improvement and does not match the abilities of the pupils. Presentation in pupils' religious education books also needs to improve.
- Achievement and progress needs to improve for most pupils by the end of Key Stage 2.

### B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The acting headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, senior leaders and staff clearly share a common passion and commitment for developing the Catholic life of the school.
- The new chair of governors is very determined and focused on school improvement and what needs to be maintained and what needs to change.
- The school is clearly a Catholic school evident from when one first enters the building. It is a clean and very well appointed environment with some delightful art work on display all around the school.
- Prayer and worship are major strengths of the school and pupils have the chance to plan, lead and prepare a wide range of liturgies across all key stages.
- The school has pupils who act as 'Faith Leaders' and they are highly effective in their role.
- Partnerships and links are very strong between the diocese, local parishes and parents. Parents are very supportive and appreciative of the work the school does in developing the spiritual and moral development of their children.
- The school does a great deal to promote the Common Good and prepare children to be of service in the wider world. Equally pupils get ample opportunities to be of service within their own school including in the school's own parliament.
- Pupil voice is greatly respected and valued within this school.

## A. Classroom Religious Education

### What has improved since the last inspection?

The school has recently introduced a new religious education (RE) curriculum. The school now has an electronic tracking system for measuring assessment and pupil progress. This is having an impact on accuracy of judgements. Pupils in some classes are being set targets and in some books next step comments are present to show them how to improve their work.

### The content of classroom religious education is good

In January, the school moved to a new RE curriculum as it was felt that this would aid coverage and progression of the subject. This work is now being embedded in the school. The curriculum is fully compliant with all diocesan requirements and is linked to the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* (RECD). As the implementation of the scheme is new there are not yet sufficient opportunities for pupils to work at greater depth in some areas and the school is aware of this. A noteworthy feature of this school is its work around the teaching of other faiths. The school is successful in this aspect and pupils are also given the opportunity to do research for home learning and record their findings in a wide variety of formats.

### Pupil achievement in religious education is good

The achievement is judged to be good overall because of the spoken and verbal responses of the pupils and the high levels of religious literacy observed in some key classes at the end of both key stages. The standards of written work in the books requires improvement as outcomes do not reflect pupils' abilities or potential. RE books are not special, are not neatly presented or well maintained and this needs to be addressed. Coverage in some classes was sparse and not of the standards expected for the ages of the pupils. Standards of attainment, progress and achievement at the end of Key Stage 2 are low and they need to improve. Pupils do produce good work in the early years and receive a good start to their school life. Equally some good standards were seen at the end of Key Stage 1 and in upper Key Stage 2. This is not consistent across the school at present. Pupils in some classes are highly articulate and have clearly received some good teaching and learning in the past. This now needs to be more consistent to match the abilities and potential of these pupils. In a discussion with older pupils it was evident that pupils had acquired a good level of religious knowledge and literacy in a wide variety of areas. This is why overall the judgement is deemed to be good but with major areas for improvement required.

### The quality of teaching is good

The quality of teaching was judged to be good overall but varied from causing concern to outstanding across the school. Where teaching was highly effective such as in Year 2 and Year 6 questioning was of a very high order and allowed pupils to make rapid progress in their learning. Equally the work then given to them was matched to their abilities and pupils were clear in what they had to do to improve. In these classes pupils were keen and enthusiastic learners and were making substantial progress. They were also eager to share their work and discuss what they knew about RE. All teachers planned their lessons and in some classes planned for the different ability ranges. In other classes the work set did not match the ability of the pupils and in some classes pupils were unsure of what they should do during the lessons. Teaching in the Early Years classes was at least good and the young children receive a good start to their school life in a secure and well set out environment. There were good opportunities to learn both indoors and out and all staff in these areas were effective in helping the young children to quickly learn. Teachers generally have high expectations of their pupils and want them to do well. The newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are

being well supported by the leadership team who recognise the strengths and weaknesses and areas for development required. Support staff play a key role in all classrooms to support a wide range of pupils of all abilities. Behaviour in almost all classes was good and of a high order in the classes where tasks fully engaged the pupils in their own learning.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education**

**is good**

The subject leader, who is also the acting headteacher, states in the school self evaluation that she is passionate about her belief in the importance of the subject in the school. This came across very clearly during the course of this inspection. She is being very well supported by a strong and effective acting deputy headteacher. Both of these key leaders are very new to their current leadership roles, having only taken up their posts in January 2017. Together they have introduced major changes in both the curriculum and the assessment of the subject. They have identified strengths and weaknesses in the school and are now beginning to act on those. One can clearly see the impact these changes are having even in the short term and this should lead to higher standards in the future if their work continues. The school's own self-evaluation is unrealistic and over generous in all its judgements of classroom religious education and needs modifying in light of this inspection. The new chair of governors is a key figure in the life of the school and provides highly effective insights into the current standards and outcomes of the school. He clearly recognises areas for development and improvement and is keen to hold leaders to account and also provide much needed support to them in this endeavour.

### **What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?**

- Raise standards of attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 2
- Review the expectations for written work, coverage and recording in RE books

## B. The Catholic life of the school

### What has improved since the last inspection?

The areas for development in the previous inspection included pupils planning class worship and forging closer links with the parish. Both of these have been fully addressed. The school is very strong in its child-led prayer and worship and has introduced some outstanding initiatives in this area. Links are outstanding in all areas between the school, parish, home and diocese.

### The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is outstanding

There is at least 10% of curriculum time devoted to RE in every class. This is a Catholic school that proclaims its faith with pride and gusto. When one enters the school it is clean, well maintained and clearly a Catholic school in its identity and purpose. There are some beautiful displays, murals and examples of children's work all around the school. There are some very refined examples of art and sculpture in key areas including classroom, halls and corridors. It is also being very well resourced for the subject and a generous budget is allocated every year. Opportunities for training and staff development are plentiful.

### The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community is outstanding

Prayer is central to the life of this school. Senior leaders ensure that there are ample opportunities for prayer and worship at all levels. In the early years children are quickly introduced to the traditional prayers of the church. Some lovely reflective liturgies and prayer services were seen at all key stages. Some of these were pupil led and the school has appointed 'Faith Leaders' to plan and initiate acts of worship. This is a really key and distinctive feature of the Catholic life of this school. Assemblies and class worship are well planned for and regular features of school life. The school celebrates all the key events of the liturgical year and during the course of this inspection the pupils were preparing for Lent. Opportunities to attend Mass, participate in the Sacraments and be of service in the prayer life of the school are plentiful. This area is judged to be outstanding.

### The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice – is outstanding

The timing of this inspection was ideal for assessing this key area. Pupils were actively engaged in preparing for Lent and were discussing such aspects as almsgiving and charity and the theology that lay behind these works. Pupil's religious literacy in this area was of a high order and pupils of all ages and abilities were able to express their feelings and ideas in an age appropriate way. The school supports and works with a wide range of charities and agencies such as Cafod, Caritas, Macmillan Nurses and the Kinambe project in Tanzania. There have been several child-initiated fund raising activities to support children's charities including cakes sales, non-uniform days and sponsored walks. All the money collected during the school's own Enterprise Week is donated to a charity selected by pupils at School Parliament, a good example of democracy in action. Pupils spoken to were very eager to highlight this area of their work. It is clear that there are ample opportunities to be of service around the school and in the wider community.

**The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf****is outstanding**

The parental questionnaire was overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work in developing the Catholic life and spiritual and moral development of the children and pupils in this school. A group of parents spoken to were equally effusive in their praise and support for the work of the school. It was overall a very strong affirmation of the appreciation of parents. Parents are invited in to all assemblies, Masses and acts of worship throughout the year. Parents are also being kept very well informed about what is going on via newsletters, emails and texts. The school website has some limited and dated information about the Catholic life of the school and this is an area for development. Partnerships with the Diocese of Westminster are also very strong. The school works closely with its RE adviser, attends training and deanery moderation events and is eager to continue and maintain all these contacts. Links with the local parishes are also very strong and the parish priest is a frequent and welcome visitor to the school. The school has worked very hard on its partnership work and therefore deserves to be judged outstanding.

**The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school****is outstanding**

The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, support staff and governors are totally committed to promoting the Catholic life of the school. The passion and commitment of the senior leaders is evident as soon as one enters St Bernadette Catholic School. They really wish this school to prosper and thrive in its mission. The new chair of governors shares this vision, drive and moral purpose. He is committed to ensuring that the school and its community move forward in the right direction.

**What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?**

- To update and develop further the school website to share its outstanding practice with the wider world

## Information about this school

- The school is a one form entry Catholic Primary school with a nursery in the village of London Colney.
- The school serves the parishes of Our Lady of Walsingham, London Colney, The Good Shepherd, Shenley, St Anthony of Padua, Radlett, St Teresa of the Child Jesus, Borehamwood and Sts John Fisher and Thomas More, Borehamwood.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 75%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 10% and from other faiths is 1%.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 92%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 5.
- There are 9% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 3 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) / Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is below average
- There is a well below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 24 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (10%).

<b>Department for Education Number</b>	919 / 3146
<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117489
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary Aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	230
<b>The appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Anthony Ingram
<b>Acting Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sandra Lavelle-Murphy
<b>Telephone number</b>	01727 822489
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stbernadette.herts.sch.uk">www.stbernadette.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@stbernadette.herts.sch.uk">admin@stbernadette.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 March 2012
<b>Grade from previous inspection:</b>	Very Good

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 8 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 2 assemblies and a number of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

## Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

## Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mr Sean Flood	Lead Inspector
Mr Daniel Keane	Associate Inspector
Mrs Nikki Kane	Associate Inspector
Mrs Sinead Steed	Associate Inspector

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