

Report of the Denominational (Section 48) Inspection
Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

St Benedict's Catholic High School

Beetons Way, Bury St Edmunds, IP32 6RH

DfE No. 9354600

URN No. 124861

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Headteacher: Hugh O'Neill

Chair of Governors: Martha Oakes

Dates of Inspection: 1st & 2nd July 2013

Diocesan Inspector: Mr Patrick Harrison

Associate Inspector: Mrs Kate Pereira

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Information about the school

St Benedict's Catholic School is a 13-18 mixed voluntary aided upper school serving the Catholic families of West Suffolk, South West Norfolk and small 'pockets' in Essex and Cambridgeshire. It serves the parishes of Brandon (with Mildenhall), Bury St Edmunds, Clare, Diss, Haverhill, Newmarket, Stowmarket, Sudbury and Thetford. The main feeder primary schools are, St Felix (Haverhill), St Louis (Newmarket), St Joseph (Sudbury), St Edmunds (Bury St Edmunds) and St Louis Middle School (Bury St Edmunds). About 70% of pupils are baptised Catholics. The remainder are largely from families who wish to have a faith school experience for their children. Its wide catchment area and the changes in school provision in parts of West Suffolk are having a direct impact on the school. A small cohort of year 7 pupils will start at the school in September.

Key for Inspection Grades

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Needs improvement 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school	Grade 1
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Outcomes for pupils and the provision in promoting Catholic education at St Benedict's Catholic School are judged to be outstanding. The effectiveness of leaders, governors and managers in developing and sustaining improvement in the Catholic Life of the school is judged to be good.

The overall effectiveness of this Catholic School is judged to be outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Seek more opportunities for pupils to have a direct say in shaping the Catholic Life of the school.
- Develop teaching and learning strategies that enable pupil progress in RE lessons to be accelerated.
- Develop a more rigorous monitoring of the Catholic Life of the school by Governors and the Leadership Team.
- Review the School Mission Statement.
- Reconsider the decision to exempt the A level RS pupils from the General RE programme.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupil's contribution to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.	Grade 1
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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. Pupils demonstrate maturity, are proud of their school and show respect to each other. They express their views and explore ideas with confidence. There are a variety of opportunities for pupils to live out the Church's mission of service to others. These include the community service work in the 6th Form, as well as 'justice & peace' groups. The pupils spoke with a sense of pride about the various charities supported by the school community. Pupils are making appropriate use of the chaplaincy provision and value the work of the Chaplaincy Coordinator. Pupils participate in the development of the Catholic Life of the school via the school council and preparing some assemblies. The pupils also enjoy the retreat opportunities provided by the school. We recommend that more opportunities are developed for pupils to have a direct say in shaping the Catholic Life of the school.

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective worship, sacramental and prayer life.	Grade 1
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The response of pupils in the school's Collective worship, sacramental and prayer life is outstanding. Prayer is clearly central to the life of the school. We saw morning prayers said in Form Groups, assembly and in the Staffroom. It is evident that pupils across the year groups take some responsibility for preparing and leading prayers, including assemblies. The pupils we spoke to enjoy the whole school masses and the Form Group masses. The 'leaver's Mass' at the end of year 11 is very popular. One particular feature that the pupils value is the weekly Exposition & Benediction on Fridays. They also greatly appreciate the religious art throughout the school and that their contributions to that art work are celebrated. It is a strong feature of the school. It is evident that prayer and collective worship at the school makes a significant contribution to the spiritual and moral development of pupils.

Pupil learning, progress and behaviour in RE	Grade 1
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Pupils enjoy Religious Education. They recognise that their teachers work hard for them and put in a lot of time and effort on their behalf. They told us that they enjoy the opportunity to explore their own views, their own faith and recognise that their views are valued by teachers. Behaviour in lessons and relationships with staff are excellent. 6th Form pupils enjoy and appreciate the opportunities in RE to look at wider views of the interaction between religious belief and wider society. There was a dip in the attainment at GCSE in 2012. However, we identified that the usual attainment at GCSE is at or above national average; the school's tracking indicates that progress in 2013 is likely to return to national the average; and that pupil progress at key stages 3 and 5 are excellent. This ensures that pupil learning, progress and behaviour in RE is outstanding. We would like to see pupil progress in lessons be accelerated. The school should aim for the attainment at GCSE to be significantly above the national average.

Leaders, Governors and Managers

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.	Grade 2
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The Governors and Leadership Team have a deep commitment to the Catholic Church's mission in education and the role the school plays in that mission. There is clear recognition of their participation with the wider Catholic education community in providing a Catholic education for the Catholic families in West Suffolk. The school has responded to the recommendations from the previous Section 48 inspection. They have provided a small chapel and have appointed a Chaplaincy Coordinator. The Headteacher reports on Catholic Life regularly, the Catholic Life of the school has a high profile in the school's development planning. Accordingly the Governors feel that they are kept informed of and contribute to developments. The school is effectively preparing for the integration of a new year 7 cohort and understand the pastoral and curriculum issues that will need addressing in this phase of school reorganisation in West Suffolk. We would like to see more rigorous monitoring of the Catholic Life of the school by Governors and the Leadership Team. This could be included in the planned reorganisation of the Governor's committee structure. The School Mission Statement is due for review.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.	Grade 1
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The leadership of the Religious Education department is outstanding. The Head of Department clearly knows the strengths and weakness in the department. The management of the curriculum is excellent. This is evident in the significant interventions in response to the GCSE results in 2012, target setting, the management of resources and the curriculum planning for the new intake of year 7 pupils. The consistently good uptake of A level pupils and the number of 6th Formers who go on to study aspects of Theology, Religious Studies and Philosophy at university is another indicator of the effective leadership of RE. While tracking is evident, we would like to see the analysis shared more regularly with Governors and school leaders. Monitoring of lessons should be more frequent to enable specific areas of development to be acted on more swiftly.

Provision

<i>The quality of Catholic Worship provided by the school.</i>	Grade 1
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The provision for Catholic Worship provided by the school is outstanding and is central to the life of the school. There are a variety of opportunities available for pupils, including prayers at morning registration, Tutor Group masses and masses for special occasions. The liturgical year is marked by seasonal prayers, assembly themes and the Sacrament of Reconciliation in Advent and Lent. There is scope to make more planned use of the liturgical year. Liturgical formation is developing through encouraging pupils to lead prayers and to contribute to the planning of liturgies. Further training of Form Tutors to enable a wider variety of collective worship in Form bases would accelerate this liturgical formation. It is very impressive to provide weekly Exposition and Benediction. The celebration of faith through the religious art around the school is exceptional.

<i>The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in RE.</i>	Grade 2
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Teaching in RE is generally good, with some outstanding teaching. Teachers are aware of pupils' differing abilities and learning needs, although there is a need to do more differentiation by task adjustment. We saw some innovative and interesting use of resources and planned group work. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and there is some evidence of tasks that challenge pupil thinking skills. To ensure more pupil progress in lessons it would be useful to incorporate more progress checks. To enable more effective learning dialogue we would like to see a greater consistency in giving feedback in marking that enables pupils to respond and develop targets for learning.

<i>The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning</i>	Grade 1
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The Religious Education curriculum is based on the Bishops' Curriculum Directory and provides well planned opportunities for pupils to develop religious understanding, literacy and to explore different views. The preparations for the new year 7 intake indicates careful thought about provision. The curriculum provided encourages moral, spiritual and vocational learning. There is a 'General RE' course for 6th Form pupils that complies with the expectations of the Bishops. Some pupils do not access this course. The school should reconsider the decision to exempt A level Religious Studies pupils from the General RE programme because the A level course followed does not adequately cover the strands of the Curriculum Directory.

EAST ANGLIA DIOCESAN SCHOOLS' SERVICE

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10th July 2013

Dear Pupils

Section 48 Inspection

I visited your school at the beginning of July with my colleague, Mrs Pereira. We enjoyed our time with you and learned a great deal about your school. We met with and talked to a number of you and you told us how proud you are of the school. It was clear to us that you are a happy community. We also spent time talking with your Headteacher and his staff. They clearly work hard with you to continue to improve your school.

The focus for our visit was to look at the Catholic life of the school and at your learning in Religious Education. Most of you make very good progress in RE and you told us that you have good relationships with your teachers. You value the efforts they make on your behalf. The exam results at A level continue to be excellent. Whilst the GCSE results in the summer of 2012 were disappointing, we were impressed by the work done by your RE teachers to return to the usual impressive results. We have asked that more varied teaching strategies are used to identify and speed up progress in lessons.

While we were at the school we attended a year 9 and a 6th Form assembly. We also visited some tutor groups to join in your prayers. We saw you join in with the prayers confidently and saw some of you lead the prayers. We were very impressed by the religious art that you have produced and is now on display throughout the school. We have asked the school to find more opportunities for you to contribute more directly in shaping the Catholic life of the school.

Everywhere we went we saw happy pupils, who were behaving well. There was a lovely calm atmosphere around the school. You should be very proud of yourselves and your school.

Yours Sincerely,
Mr Patrick Harrison
Section 48 Inspector