

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

St Benet's Catholic Primary School
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For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Mrs Clare Valori

Headteacher: Mrs Maria Uragallo

Denominational Inspector:

Mrs Rosemary Barker

Dates of Inspection: 29th November 2012

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DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

St. Benet's Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average primary school set in the leafy grounds of and serving the parish of St. Benet's Minster in Beccles. There are 105 pupils on roll 45% of whom are Catholic. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties (12%) is slightly above the national average with 3% having a statement of Special Educational Needs. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, 8%, is less than the national average. The number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is low. Pupils are taught in four classes, all of which are mixed age groupings with the exception of the Reception Class. The school has gained a number of awards including Healthy Schools and the Get Set Network.

In September 2009 St. Benet's together with St. Edmunds Catholic Primary School, Bungay, (approximately seven miles away) became the Federation of Catholic Schools of the Waveney Valley. This was made a hard federation in September 2010 with a single governing body and an executive headteacher running both schools. The present executive headteacher was appointed in March 2011.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL.

Grade: 2

St. Benet's is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. The strong Catholic identity is visible and real in the everyday life of the school. Committed leadership by the executive headteacher supported by staff, governing body and the Priest in Charge is successfully driving forward the shared identity of the federation whilst still celebrating the individual character and achievement of each school. Prayer and worship are of central importance and a high profile is given to religious education within a whole curriculum setting.

Relationships within school are very good and reflect Christian concern and respect for others. Staff create an environment where pupils are respected, listened to, and where learning is fun. Good behaviour and attitudes reflect the outstanding personal, spiritual and moral development of pupils and demonstrate that the school lives its mission statement to "...hold Christ at the centre and recognise him in everyone as we journey together teaching and learning, challenging each other to be all that we can be."

The self-evaluation of the school is accurate and comprehensive. The headteacher has a good overall view of strengths and development needs in the school and within the federation. Federation has provided positive advantages to the school through shared training and expertise for staff; curriculum enrichment for pupils; and input from two parishes. Development needs from the last inspection have been addressed. This school and the federation has a very good capacity to improve and is moving towards its aspiration to be outstanding.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

- Empower pupils in their leadership of worship by developing age appropriate planning opportunities for liturgy and worship and implementing the planned development of celebrating Mass in the classroom.

- To explore possibilities for re-development of current building space to provide a whole school dedicated prayer area for class/group activities to enhance spiritual development through greater opportunities for personal reflective thought and prayer.

PUPILS. How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups. Grade 2

Pupils benefit greatly from the Catholic life of the school. Behaviour is good and pupils are fully aware of school expectations and commit willingly to the demands made on them by the Catholicity of the school. A prayer table in each classroom reflects the Catholic identity of the school but the limitations of a shared school/parish hall can be restrictive when seeking a whole school space for reflective thought and personal spiritual development. Pupils show respect to adults and each other. They feel fully empowered to deal with any bullying problems through advice in the classroom and at special assemblies, but are adamant that there is no bullying in school. *'We're kind...everyone's friendly'* they said. *'Teachers' listen to you and listen to your opinion.'* They enthusiastically undertake responsibilities and show concern for others. Through a well-developed 'Buddy' system older pupils support the younger pupils in the playground and the lunch hall as well as working together in a buddy reading initiative. They also sit and successfully model for their buddies appropriate behaviour during Mass and religious celebrations and help them with Mass responses. Pupils know their views are important. The school council gives them a voice to share ideas, comment on initiatives and raise concerns. They are currently undertaking a survey on school uniform, *'We want to be smart and look like pupils from St. Benet's school but also share something with St. Edmund's'* they said. They are proud of their special individual and shared identity within a federation.

Prayer and worship are an integral part of the school day. All children take part irrespective of their own religious background and participate in prayer with ease and respect. High quality singing enhances worship. An assembly programme linked to the liturgical year and celebrations encompasses class assemblies for parents, whole school praise assemblies and classroom-based assemblies. During the inspection, Key Stage 1 pupils effectively led an assembly sharing poetry and art work from this term's topics within a framework of prayers and hymns. They were articulate, well behaved and positively brimming with enthusiasm. Parent attendance was high. The same dedicated school hymn and a pupil friendly Mass book for the new responses, used by both schools and compiled by the Chair of Governors, reinforces the commitment to their shared federated identity within the Catholic community.

Pupils make steady progress in religious literacy with the majority attaining age appropriate levels of attainment and some achieving more. Lessons observed in all classes were at least good, with some outstanding. They shared the common theme of Advent clearly showing progression across age groups. There was awe and wonder visible as the youngest pupils were introduced to the Christmas story followed by cross curricular activities presented within a well structured framework, showing independent child led learning and thinking. Addressing the topic from a new viewpoint in each successive class, new skills of enquiry and depth of thought led to purposeful learning and increased understanding, with highly developed research skills independently used by the oldest pupils. In all classes pupils were articulate and responsive and lessons had good pace. Learning objectives and success criteria were in place and plenary sessions summed up what had been achieved and prepared for next steps.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS. How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the school **Grade:2**

The Headteacher is deeply committed to promoting the Catholic life of the school. She has a clear vision for the future of the school within the new federation structure, which is communicated to and shared by all members of staff. The new opportunities created by the federation - shared expertise and resources, joint staff meetings and professional development, and closer links between partner school pupils, contribute positively as the school moves towards its aim to be "... a beacon of Catholic excellence." Published schemes of work linked to new diocesan guidelines, developed within the Catholic schools' cluster, are in place, providing a structured framework for RE. Teachers are guided and supported well in the delivery of the curriculum. The emphasis placed on pupils' spiritual moral and social growth is a strength reinforced by events such as Year 6 pupils' attendance at the annual Catholic schools' Walsingham pilgrimage and a retreat for 'The Year of Faith'. The benefit of widening RE leadership through the appointment of a new RE Co-ordinator is recognised by the Headteacher.

Governors fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities. Two governing bodies merged into a single unit with meetings in alternate schools has given a wide range of expertise and promoted the constructive dialogue and challenge necessary for successful integration. They are purposeful in their intentions and recognise the beneficial growth that the changes have brought about. Governors take advantage of training offered. Informal monitoring through visits, meetings, attendance at school events and services is under development for a more formal role in moderating assessment and attainment.

The school is welcoming and inclusive. There are excellent links with other Catholic schools and a high level of community involvement. Sport, drama and enrichment classes at the local high school, visits and use of local amenities (library, museum, swimming pool), reinforce community identity and pupils are justly proud of their 'Pride in Beccles' award. Parish links are good. The Priest in Charge regularly visits the school and commented *'It is conspicuously a place where people are made welcome.'*

Pupils are globally aware, successfully fundraising for the purchase of world gifts in the CAFOD "Advent for Africa" project, and sponsoring a pupil and fundraising for a Congo school. They have compassion for local needs also and enjoy their carol singing for the residents of a care home.

The school web-site and email notification keeps parents informed of school activities. The help of parent volunteers is welcomed and there is an active 'Friends of the School' association. Parents appreciate the approachability of teachers who respond to enquiries and concerns promptly.

PROVISION. How effective is the provision for Catholic education: Grade 2

The sacramental life of the school is strong with the whole school joining parishioners for regular celebration of the Mass in the adjoining church and more recently, parishioners welcomed to Mass in the school/church hall. A progression to classroom Masses is planned with pupils taking a more active role in leading the worship through planning and organisation, choosing relevant themes, readings and hymns, and writing bidding prayers. The Priest in Charge works well with the school and is supportive of this development. Catholic traditions are celebrated, for example, devotions to Our Lady in May and October with the opportunity to pray the rosary during lunchtime sessions in these months. A reconciliation service is held during Lent and Advent.

In religious education, teachers show secure knowledge and understanding. They engage pupils with well planned and purposeful tasks, and employ a variety of different methods with a mix of visual presentations, role play and practical activities to motivate pupils. Good pupil to pupil dialogue raise thoughtful questions and responses as did teacher and pupil question and answer sessions. There are high expectations of pupil behaviour and attitudes which are fully met. The Catholic ethos underpins the whole curriculum with cross curricular links in other areas of learning. Pupils' books evidence interesting work though this was sometimes let down by poor presentation. This issue, raised by OFSTED, has seen improvement with higher expectations matched by better presentation. Positive marking in books is starting to include questions and comments leading to religious/spiritual growth. Pupils' work is displayed and includes prayers written by pupils as well as traditional prayers. 'World Faith' artefact boxes have been purchased to further develop learning about other cultures and faith beliefs.

The school has invested in a new published scheme of work, 'The Way, the Truth and the Life'. Pupils were enthusiastic in their support of the new topics covered. Extension materials from other schemes supplement this. Pupils of all abilities make progress in lessons through differentiated activities and outcomes and extra support is given to meet special educational needs. Assessments take place regularly and are linked to national levels of attainment. Older pupils use self-assessment to record personal progress through meaningful 'I can' statements.

Religious education meets the requirement of the Bishops' Conference. A minimum of 10% of curriculum time is given to religious education.

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Letter to pupils explaining the findings from the Diocesan Inspection

3rd December 2012

Dear Pupils

Diocesan Inspection of St Benet's Catholic Primary School

Thank-you for making me so welcome at your school. Thank-you to all those pupils who spoke to me especially the group from the School Council. I was very interested to hear your views about the school and the federation. I enjoyed being present at your Key Stage1 assembly and sharing your religious education lessons on Advent as a preparation for a meaningful and spiritual celebration for Christmas. I am sure you will all have some very special prayers and actions to offer as presents for baby Jesus.

Here are some of the things I especially liked.

- The strong Catholic ethos of your school that provides many opportunities for prayer and worship
- You are friendly and kind to each other and are well-cared for by your teachers
- The school provides very good opportunities for you to develop personally, spiritually and morally
- The enjoyable and interesting tasks that your teachers plan to help your religious education

I have asked your teachers and governors to consider giving you opportunities to plan and organise your worship, and the priest to celebrate the Mass with you in your classrooms sometimes. I have also asked them to try to find a place for quiet, spiritual and thoughtful reflection and prayer, that you can use as a whole class or in small groups to help you grow closer in your friendship with God.

Thank you again for your help. I wish you the very best for the future,

Yours sincerely

Mrs R. Barker
Diocesan Inspector