

**Report of the Denominational (Section 48) Inspection
Carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

**St Benet's Catholic Primary School
Ringsfield Road
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DCFS 935/3333

For the Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Acting Headteacher Mrs Kim Payne

Chair of Governors Mr David Willis

Denominational Inspector Miss Beryl Edwards

Date of Inspection 10th July 2009

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Description of School

St Benet's Catholic Primary School is a small school serving the parish of the same name situated in the town of Beccles. There are 94 pupils on roll aged 4-11. 39.58 % of pupils are Catholic. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and a very small number speak English as an additional language. Attainment on entry can vary but over time is broadly average. The number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties/disabilities is around average (17.8%) but there is a higher than average percentage (4.5%) of pupils who have a statement of educational needs. The pupils are organised into 4 classes. Many pupils leave at the end of Year 4 so numbers in Years 5 and 6 are small.

The school currently has an acting headteacher and acting deputy/religious education coordinator both seconded from other Catholic Primary Schools. There are 6 teachers (including the headteacher), 2 of whom are Catholic.

The school is preparing for federated status, starting September 2009, with a similar sized Catholic primary school, St Edmund's in Bungay. This status means that both schools will have the same headteacher but each will have a separate governing body and budget.

Key for Inspection Grades

Grade 1 – outstanding Grade 2 - good Grade 3 – satisfactory Grade 4 – unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic School

Grade 2

St Benet's is a good school with many strengths. One of these is the excellent relationships between members of the school community. Pupils enjoy coming to school for their learning and friendship. They feel valued and respected and their self esteem is high. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good. They have a sense of responsibility towards each other and those who are less fortunate. Close relationships exist between school, home and parish.

The high importance attached to Religious Education in the curriculum and to the prayer life of the school, is evident. The mission statement "at St Benet's School we 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" is displayed prominently throughout the school.

The school is a caring, safe and happy place.

Teaching and learning as well as achievement and standards are good.

Despite changes in headship the staff are positive and stable and morale is very high.

Improvements since the last inspection

Grade 2

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection. A rigorous monitoring system has been implemented; classroom observation, scrutiny of work, recording of attainment targets in order to track pupils, staff training and working together have enabled staff to move forward with confidence.

Some resources have been purchased to support teachers in their deliverance of the curriculum and to motivate pupils to learn. More will be bought as the budget allows.

The capacity of the School Community to Improve and Develop Grade 2

The school has good capacity to improve and develop further. Although in recent years there have been changes in headship and at the moment there is an acting headteacher the staff are very positive about the future. There is a good understanding of the mission of the school as a Catholic education community. There is a strong commitment from the leadership team, staff and governors to bring about improvement through professional development and self evaluation. Religious Education and the religious life of the school are at the forefront of development plans.

What the School should do to improve further

- Continue to build on, refine and embed strategies used to assess children's learning and develop it still further.
- Develop pupils' knowledge of Britain as a diverse society and of cultures other than their own through the Religious Knowledge curriculum.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

Grade 2

The Catholic life of the school is developed effectively to a high standard through a close working partnership with the headteacher, Religious Education Coordinator, staff and governors. They share a common vision for the school with a clear sense of its Catholic mission. They ensure the school's mission statement is put into practice on a daily basis through personal example rooted in gospel values. This is particularly evident in the high quality of care given to all pupils. The ethos of the school is effective in promoting an atmosphere in which all feel included.

There are very good relationships with parents, the local parish and the wider community.

The governors are knowledgeable about the Catholic life of the school. The parish priest, who is also a governor, is a regular visitor to the school. The quality of the Catholic school is monitored and evaluated in an informal manner by the governors. A more formal approach would strengthen their leadership.

The Sacramental and prayer life of the School Grade 2

Worship lies at the heart of the school. There are a range of formal and informal opportunities for pupils to engage in prayer and acts of worship.

A termly schedule of masses and assemblies is planned. There are other liturgies e.g. a May procession in honour of Mary. Reconciliation takes place in Lent. At Christmas the school produces a dramatised Nativity in the Church to which parents and parishioners are invited. Teachers ensure that prayer is interwoven within Religious Education lessons demonstrating its importance and relevance to daily life. Within each lesson observed there was time for quiet reflection and prayer enhanced by the use of candles, music or singing. All the pupils participated with a sense of reverence and respect.

The assembly observed was outstanding with the use of visual imagery and music as stimuli. The pupils took part with an attitude of awe and wonder and sang spontaneously when they knew the words of the psalm.

The parish priest, as chaplain, is very active in the school. The pupils take an active part in all school masses. Year 6 pupils plan their own leaving mass. The children write their own prayers.

There is a new quiet area in the grounds where pupils/adults can go for times of reflection.

Collective worship makes a good contribution to the spiritual and moral growth of the pupils.

Community Cohesion Grade 2

This is an inclusive school, welcoming all, promoting equal opportunities and a sense of belonging. Relationships are positive and there is an effective 'buddy' system so no pupil needs to feel alone. The pupils take part in a range of parish and local activities. The choir leads the parish carol service, takes part in local church occasions e.g. Songs of Praise and the town music festival. They sing in local old peoples' homes.

Parents, parishioners and friends of the school regularly contribute to the daily life of the school tending school gardens and running school clubs.

High school pupils come to the school for work experience and are very impressed with the manner in which they were made to feel valued in the school.

Pupils join with others from Diocesan schools on the Walsingham pilgrimage.

The study of Judaism and Islam is included in the Religious Education curriculum. Pupils have visited the nearest synagogue.

Through the curriculum the pupils are made aware of how other people live in various parts of the world. They raise money for charities, both at home and overseas such as CAFOD and Mission Together. They sponsor a child and raise money for a school in the Congo. More could be made of this link to demonstrate different life styles and conditions.

The pupils are less aware of the diversity of cultures within their own country.

Religious Education

Achievements and Standards

Grade 2

Achievements and standards in Religious Education are good. The pupils' attitude and behaviour are very good. They are enthusiastic about the variety of activities that maintain their interest and encourage them to learn. In all classes teaching assistants work with pupils enabling all to achieve to their potential.

Good progress is made throughout the school and pupils are achieving expected age appropriate levels of work.

Books are well presented and showed a suitable quantity of differentiated activities.

Marking at the top of the school is particularly good, showing pupils the way forward with comments to make them question and think at a higher level.

Assessments are made and used to inform future planning.

Religious Education underpins the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and was clearly demonstrated in the topic of 'neighbours'. This was helping to create a strong sense of a world community where everyone is valued.

Quality of Teaching and Learning

Grade 2

All teaching observed was good. In lessons the learning objective was shared with the pupils and teachers made good use of plenaries. All planning was very thorough and of a high standard. All classes were doing the topic 'neighbours'. There were differentiated activities seen in all lessons which were built on previous work. Good use was made of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by teachers and pupils.

Good quality open ended questioning was observed in all lessons. There was a level of challenge for all pupils. Pupils worked well in groups, with partners and independently. The work was tailored to suit the ability of individuals with good use being made of teaching assistants. The development of skills was encouraged. There was evidence in planning that some pupils make assessments of their own work. The pupils were confident, very well behaved and focussed on the task in hand. They were happy to discuss and present their work at the end of the lessons.

Each classroom had a focus point to stimulate learning, there was a celebration of work through display.

The children know formal prayers and stories from the Old and New Testaments.

Quality of the Religious Education Curriculum

Grade 2

The curriculum in Religious Education fulfils the requirements of the Catholic Curriculum Directory. 10% of curriculum time is allocated to it. The themes and topics follow the cycle proposed by the 'Here I Am' programme and is in keeping with the Church's year. There is planned progression. Resources have improved and there are plans to purchase more as the budget allows. A wide variety of teaching methods are used. There are many cross curricular

links, ICT, literacy, Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), speaking and listening skills, drama and art. Judaism and Islam are studied as part of the curriculum.

Pupils have opportunities to take on responsibilities and duties e.g. school council and the 'buddy' system, and thus make a significant contribution to creating a vibrant, happy caring environment.

All pupils are able to make progress in knowledge, skills and understanding and learn to think spiritually, ethically and theologically.

Leadership and Management of Religious Education Grade 2

The headteacher and religious education co-ordinator have a very good overview of the subject and communicate its high priority effectively to the staff. They have a strong sense of the educational mission of the school which is shared by the staff. All staff feel supported with advice and practical help. They attend all available training. Monitoring is thorough and includes lesson observation and work scrutiny.

The subject has its own action plan and budget. The staff are reflective and eager to promote high standards and quality religious education as well as the faith development of the pupils. The governors are supportive and have a clear understanding of the nature of the school. The chair of governors sees himself as a 'critical friend' of the school.

There are good links with parents, parish and outside agencies to support the work of the school.

The school building has many religious displays, crucifixes and statuary, clearly showing the centrality of the Catholic ethos.

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Letter to pupils explaining the findings from the Diocesan Inspection

16th July 2009

Dear pupils

Diocesan Inspection of St Benet's School Beccles.

Thank you for welcoming me into your school and for allowing me to come into your classrooms to see the exciting things you do in your RE lessons. Your singing in assembly was very beautiful. You were all very attentive and your behaviour was excellent.

I was very interested to hear your views of the school when I spoke to some of you.

Here are some of the things I especially liked about your school.

- The way you show respect for each other and the adults in your school
- Your enthusiasm for your RE lessons and the reverent manner in your acts of worship.
- Your 'buddy' system so no one need feel lonely or unwanted
- Your school provides very good opportunities for you to develop spiritually, morally and socially together.

I have asked your teachers to do two specific things to make your Religious Education even better.

Firstly to continue their work on assessment and use it to help you achieve even higher standards.

Secondly to develop your knowledge of Britain as a diverse society and of cultures other than your own.

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

Yours sincerely

Beryl Edwards

Diocesan Inspector