



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection

ST BERNARD'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wake Green Rd, Birmingham, B13 9QE

Inspection date 13th-14th July 2017

Reporting Inspector Denis Cody
Assistant Inspector Deborah Huxtable

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	418
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Daryl Heeney
Telephone number	0121 464 3795
E-mail address	enquiry@st-bernards.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	July 2012
DFE School Number	330/3375
Unique Reference Number	103462

Headteacher Patrick O'Leary

Previous inspection: Good

This inspection: Good

Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors.
- The focus of the inspection was on the quality, leadership, and impact of the school's provision of Catholic life, collective worship, and religious education (RE).
- The inspectors observed teaching across 12 RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic life, worship, and the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with the chair of governors, RE link governor, headteacher, subject leader and the school priest chaplain.
- The inspectors attended a whole school Mass and prayer assembly, a hymn practice promoting Catholic values and virtues and an act of worship led by pupils from the chaplaincy team. They also undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, RAISEonline, the development plan and teachers' planning.

Information about the school

- St Bernard's is a larger than average two form entry school, one of two primary schools situated in the parish of English Martyrs, Moseley in Birmingham.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is significantly higher than the national average.
- Currently 28% of pupils are baptised Catholics.
- The school serves an area where the level of disadvantage is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special education needs or disabilities is below the national average.
- Attainment on entry is significantly below the national average.
- The RE leader was appointed to the post in September 2015.
- The parish priest of English Martyrs retired in March 2016 and a permanent priest has recently been appointed.

Main Findings

- An outstanding quality of Catholic life drives the ethos of the school and is reflected in its values, priorities and day to day activities, as well as in the attitudes and relationships of pupils and staff.
- The quality and provision of collective worship is good, both promoting and reinforcing Catholic life and teaching.
- The quality of provision in RE is good. Teaching in RE is good with some outstanding practice, and pupils make excellent progress in their knowledge and understanding of RE.

- Leadership at all levels is very good and outstanding in its commitment to Catholic life. A range of monitoring activities informs and underpins improvement planning and development in Catholic life and RE.
- In terms of Catholic life, collective worship and RE, St Bernard's is a very good school with strong leadership.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual, moral and vocational development: provision and outcomes

- Its outstanding Catholic life is a defining feature and strength of the school.
- In its ethos, physical appearance, and pastoral support for pupils and their families, St Bernard's is a visible and active Catholic presence in the local community.
- Pupils from all faiths and backgrounds are welcomed into the school and they and their families are made to feel safe and valued. Pupils of all faiths and none respect and support the Catholic nature of the school and feel they have a part to play in it.
- The school's Catholic ethos is lived out through its proactive pastoral support procedures. School leaders and staff are demonstrably committed to the welfare of all their pupils, especially the most vulnerable and those in greatest need.
- Its Catholic character and mission are clearly proclaimed and celebrated throughout the school environment in displays, symbols and messages. The pupils' motto, "*We work, we play, we care, we pray,*" is widely displayed and is referenced by pupils and staff. Similarly the image of footsteps is much in evidence. The pupils understand that following in the footsteps of Jesus helps them to be a good person.
- An outdoor prayer area, designed with pupil involvement, provides a very visible focus for prayer and worship.
- Each class has a dedicated patron saint with whom pupils identify. Learning about the lives of these saints provides pupils with roles models for their own lives.
- The positive impact of the school's Catholic life is evident in pupils' understanding of right and wrong and in their strong commitment to the common good. They are actively involved in planning and delivering the school's fundraising for charities such as Cafod and the local Sparkhill foodbank.
- It is also evident in the strong sense of community among leaders, staff and pupils, in the supportive and respectful relationships displayed throughout the school and in the confidence with which pupils discuss their own faith and beliefs.
- Pupils play an active part in the wider Catholic community. They were involved in the parish mission and individual parishioners act as 'prayer sponsors' for pupils during their sacramental preparation.
- They have links with other schools in their diocesan cluster groups and with their sister school in the parish with whom they have shared sacramental preparation.
- Pupils also contribute to the school's evaluation of its Catholic life. Aspects of Catholic life are included in pupil questionnaires and the school council have carried out audits of classrooms and prayer areas recording evidence of Catholicity. School leaders recognise that opportunities should now be provided for more pupils to become involved in such activities.
- The quality, provision and impact of collective worship in the school is good.

- Prayer and worship are a fundamental part of the school's daily life and celebrations. Staff prayers are held at the start of the school day and all staff meetings begin with a prayer.
- The themes used in collective worship reflect and reinforce the school's Catholic character and aspects of the RE curriculum.
- The school's prayer life encompasses whole school assemblies and key stage, phase and class prayer services. At different times in the liturgical year lunchtime prayer groups meet, for example to pray the Rosary in October or the Stations of the Cross during Lent in the prayer garden.
- Weekly school Masses are prepared and led by different classes. Pupils enjoy leading and contributing to these Masses, and do so attentively and with reverence.
- The school has an active chaplaincy team, which comprises eight pupils from Year 5. These pupils receive training and support from the lay chaplain at Bishop Challoner School. They collaborate with their counterparts in other schools in planning and leading collective worship. The lay chaplain visits the school weekly and supports team members in preparing acts of worship which they then deliver in individual classrooms.
- There are some other opportunities for pupils to plan and lead acts of worship, for example in the case of prayer leaders in each class. However, strategies should now be developed to extend these opportunities to more pupils throughout the school.
- Pupils are actively involved in monitoring and evaluating aspects of collective worship through prayer audits and interviews. Pupil questionnaires include sections on their experience of collective worship, and they have carried out evaluations following assemblies and school Masses.
- The school's provision of spiritual, moral and vocational development is good.
- Pupils are familiar with Catholic values and virtues, which are taught through the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile, and can relate them to their own lives. Introduced in school assemblies, they are discussed and reinforced in classrooms and prominently displayed around the school. 'Leaves' recognising where pupils have put them into practice are attached to a 'Virtues Tree' in the school entrance. Parents and families are made aware of the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile through the school website and weekly newsletters.
- Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced by themed, reflective retreats. These take place in school during Lent and Advent, are sometimes part of sacramental preparation and are also included in visits to Alton Castle.
- School planning indicates an ongoing focus on vocation which is evidenced by photographs around the school of pupils living out their vocation. Its impact is seen in their willingness to undertake roles of responsibility and service within the school and in their growing ability to link the charitable activities they carry out with their calling to help and support others.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership of Catholic life and Collective Worship

- Leadership of Catholic life is outstanding and leadership of collective worship is good.

- The headteacher, senior staff and governing body are fully committed to the Catholic nature and ethos of the school, and as such provide role models for the whole school community.
- This commitment is reflected in the high priority given to Catholic life and collective worship in school improvement planning. It is a priority in the school development plan, implementation of which is included in an RE action plan. Both are subject to regular review by senior leaders and governors.
- Governors are familiar with the nature and quality of Catholic life and collective worship in the school and are fully involved with new planning and initiatives. They receive regular feedback in reports from the headteacher and RE leader. The link governor liaises with the RE subject leader and individual governors regularly attend school worship.
- Leaders ensure that Catholic life is an important aspect of the staff induction process for newly-qualified teachers and staff new to the school. It is promoted through staff briefings and all staff are made aware of its significance in school life.
- The RE subject leader regularly attends diocesan cluster group meetings. This has enabled her to successfully share diocesan recommendations and good practice regarding Catholic life, RE and collective worship with senior leaders, staff and governors.
- Elements of Catholic life and collective worship, such as prayer and liturgy, are included in the whole school monitoring cycle, with input from all stakeholders including pupils, staff, governors and parents. Audits, reviews, questionnaires and learning walks provide information which informs future improvement planning and provides feedback on the progress of current initiatives.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have received in-service training in collective worship in order to improve their confidence in planning and leading worship. This has been monitored through learning walks and has had a positive impact on the quality of school worship.
- School leaders actively promote its Catholic life within the school and local community. Through distribution of prayer bags and copies of the '*Wednesday Word*' they encourage pupils and their families to discuss gospel messages and pray together at home. Weekly newsletters include spiritual reflections and highlight both the current assembly themes and the Catholic values and virtues being focussed upon in school. Similarly, prayer, worship and the Catholic nature of the school are given great prominence on the school website.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education

- The quality of religious education at St Bernard's is good in terms of leadership, provision and outcomes for pupils.
- Leadership of RE is strong. The relatively new subject leader has embraced the role enthusiastically and works closely alongside the headteacher, senior leaders and the RE link governor to oversee and develop teaching and learning and all aspects of RE provision.
- The guidance she offers to newly qualified teachers and non-Catholic teachers supports them well in planning and teaching RE.
- Together with the governing body as a whole, senior leaders ensure that RE remains a core subject in the school, in terms of budget and timetable allocation and curriculum and staff development. It is a key aspect of staff induction.
- As is the case with Catholic life, the RE link governor is actively involved in observing and monitoring RE activities, and RE targets always feature prominently in the school development plan.

- Governors receive and discuss regular reports from school leaders and the link governor regarding teaching and learning, pupil attainment and improvement planning in RE. As a result, they have a good understanding of the strengths and areas of development in RE.
- Pupils of all faiths and religions, and none enjoy RE. They are enthusiastic and engage well in their lessons. Achievement in RE is at least in line with that in other subject areas.
- Pupils confidently discuss their learning in RE and demonstrate good understanding of the Catholic values and virtues taught in school, and how these relate to their everyday lives.
- Most pupils enter school with very little knowledge or experience of the Catholic faith. Analysis of attainment data over time indicates that from this very low starting point they make good progress in Foundation Stage. This is maintained throughout Key Stage 1 and the early years of Key Stage 2, with most pupils of all abilities making very good progress in upper Key Stage 2.
- The quality of teaching in RE is very good, with some outstanding practice. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and lessons are well-prepared and meet the needs of pupils of all abilities.
- Teachers receive regular in-service training to support effective teaching and learning in RE. This is organised in response to identified needs or new initiatives and is delivered by the diocesan RE department, the Birmingham Catholic Partnership or within school by the RE subject leader.
- To ensure consistency in delivery of the RE curriculum and to facilitate sharing of ideas, teachers in the same year group plan lessons together. This promotes and reflects the strong team ethic among staff.
- Pupils' learning is challenged and extended by careful questioning during lessons and by developmental marking and the use of gap tasks.
- Pupils have experience of evaluating their own work against the objectives outlined in the diocesan scheme of work using Unit Markers, and good use is made of digital technology by staff and pupils to support learning.
- The quality of teaching in RE is monitored through lesson observations, book trawls, pupil feedback and learning walks carried out by senior leaders including the RE link governor. The results of these are shared with teachers and contribute to RE action plans. However, the quantity of written work produced is not consistent across the school. Monitoring conducted through book trawls needs to be more robust. This will ensure that the good practice in some classes is emulated by all, and diocesan recommendations are met.
- Regular assessments of pupils' work in RE, carried out and recorded in line with diocesan guidance, are in place across the school. The resulting attainment data is monitored and analysed by senior leaders and teachers and informs judgements about teaching. Comparisons are made between year groups and between the same groups of pupils over time. The outcomes inform school improvement planning and curriculum development. For example, when attainment in the prayer unit was lower than in others, a review of prayer and how it was being taught in the school was carried out. Prayer was then prioritised in the school development plan and outcomes improved.
- Moderation of pupils' work, completed in school and with staff from other schools in the Catholic cluster group, ensures the quality and accuracy of teachers' judgements in assessment.
- The archdiocese scheme of work, *'Learning and Growing as the People of God,'* together with its planning and assessment procedures, is the foundation of the RE curriculum. This is complemented by the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile focussing on Catholic values and virtues.

- Photographs capturing moments of 'wonder and awe' are posted on the school website and in one classroom a 'wonderwall' encourages pupils to pose and consider big questions of 'meaning and purpose.' Opportunities such as these should be more consistently developed throughout the curriculum.
- Sacramental preparation, teaching about vocation and encouraging the development of spirituality are all enhanced by retreats, visits to Catholic places of worship and presentations from visiting speakers.
- The curriculum is under constant review. Delivery of the curriculum is reviewed in accordance with diocesan advice at cluster meetings. It is also responsive to the monitoring of teaching and learning. For example, when analysis of pupil attainment indicated that in certain year groups boys' performance was below that of girls, teaching methods were adapted to include more practical activities in RE lessons.
- The curriculum also provides opportunities for pupils to have an awareness of other faiths and religions through visits to places of worship. They also learn about relationship and sex education through the '*All that I Am*' programme. This provision is currently being reviewed.

Recommendations

In order to improve the school should:

- Involve more pupils in planning and leading collective worship.
- Ensure the quantity of written work in RE is consistent in all classes and meets with diocesan recommendations.