



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
Of the Education Act 2005
URN 118860

St Bartholomew's Catholic Primary School
Sycamore Drive
Swanley
Kent
BR8 7AY

Inspection date: 9 May 2013

Chair of Governors:	Mr Terry Austin
Headteacher:	Mr Kevin McPartland
Inspectors:	Mr Stephen Beck
	Mrs Marilyn McCaughan

EDUCATION COMMISSION

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington BR5 2SR
Tel 01689 829331 Fax 01689 829255
Director of Education: Dr Anne Bamford

SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St Bartholomew's is a voluntary aided school, situated in the Gravesend Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark is maintained by Kent Local Authority. The principal parish, which the school serves, is Holy Apostles, Swanley. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics has remained relatively steady at 35% reflecting the demographics of the area. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is at least 10% in all key stages.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 340. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals remains below average but has risen to 15% over recent times. An increasing number of pupils, currently 20%, receive extra support in class. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds but in the last few years the number of pupils joining the school from Black African and Afro Caribbean backgrounds which currently stands at 14% has continued to grow. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language has continued to rise since the last inspection and now stands at 22%.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

GRADE
2

St Bartholomew's is a very good Catholic school with some outstanding features, such as the leadership and management of the school and quality of provision for worship.

It is a warm, welcoming school from the point of arrival at the school's reception, with a strong emphasis on teamwork. St Bartholomew's is a school that recognises that change brings opportunities and as a result is able to adapt to changing circumstances such as the demographic variations in recent years. This enables the school to meet the needs of individual pupils very effectively and as a result helps sustain its supportive nature.

The Mission Statement is subscribed to and presented faithfully by a dedicated team of teachers, administrative staff, teaching assistants, premises and lunchtime staff who believe that the Christian values presented with conviction to the children, parents and each other help them to deliver a supportive educational message in a complex society. The school was noted in its last inspection for being extremely effective in living out its Mission Statement and its school motto, 'To serve the Lord with joy'. It is notable that this continues to be at the centre of all it does, providing a clear reference point for all involved with the school. An overwhelmingly positive response to parent and staff questionnaires was received.

The school is distinctive in that it delivers Catholic education with a strong sense of inclusion of other faiths and cultures and delivers continuity of education in that it manages change well. The school has found it difficult at times to recruit staff but it is noteworthy how quickly the staff appointed grow in stature and are developed. This results in a number making quick career progression that see them move on to other schools, having, during their time at St Bartholomew's, given of their many and varied talents. Staff explicitly share their faith and the traditions they nurture and value acting as excellent role models for pupils. The school is recognised by all as a listening school and as a result Governors, Staff, Pupils, Parish and Parents feel included and valued.

Curriculum provision for class lessons, for worship, for liturgy, for prayer life and Christian action are strong and effective overall. Programmes are carried out by caring qualified teachers who are mindful of their duty to pass on the Catholic faith to the next generation. They are supported in this endeavour by the governing body, which sets a clear direction and monitors outcomes and attend events led by the school. The staff assure and assist each other in their roles to promote the good of the school for the children.

The school provided a detailed self-evaluation form in preparation for this inspection, which was marked by its analysis of its strengths and areas for development that inspectors have been able to validate. The SEF form has the potential to be an even more valuable development tool if a more bullet pointed approach is adopted when it is next reviewed. The development issue relating to marking, raised in the previous inspection has been addressed in the main and there is now a good opportunity to complete this in conjunction with the introduction of the 'Come and See' scheme. St Bartholomew's continues to be a school that is self-reflective, builds on its strengths, works on areas for development and continually strives to improve, wanting the very best for all of its pupils. It is a school with a strong capacity for ongoing improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, headteacher and staff should:

- Secure the use of the new 'Come and See' programme through planned CPD and the updating of the school's Religious Education policy applicable to its context.
- Continue to develop the school's assessment data for Religious Education linked to the new scheme to enable assessment to have an even greater impact on planning to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Consider further developing the very good Religious Education links on the school web site to celebrate more widely the liturgical life of the school.
- Continue the development of parish links through the proposed staff, governor and clergy working party.

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The Catholic life of the school

GRADE 1

Leadership and management

Strong leadership and management underpin the school's distinctive values and its successful focus on supporting and encouraging achievement. The governors, headteacher and senior managers work exceptionally well in partnership with each other to promote the school's strong Catholic ethos in which the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development flourishes. The headteacher has created a very calm, reflective community, where the care of pupils pastorally and academically is paramount. Excellent teamwork exists throughout the school and ensures a consistent approach and high expectations of behaviour and attainment. This is reinforced by a flexible senior management team which allows middle leaders to become involved in the decision making process of whole school development, providing an exemplar for succession planning. The school is very active within its Deanery group of schools.

The school benefits from a very active and supportive governing body, whose members give generously of their time and take their role very seriously. They are willing to challenge and question when necessary and do so based on a good knowledge of their school. St Bartholomew's certainly promotes, 'a community where all individuals feel they are valued and belong.' This is based on the premise that the school, in promoting home/school/ parish partnership, recognises that parents are the first teachers of their children and that spiritual development is essentially home based, with the school building this up through the curriculum and by example.

The strong partnership with parents through the school's Parents' Association and help from volunteers, aids delivery of wider curriculum opportunities in sport and reading and provides financial and practical help. The school ethos underpins learning and the pupils thrive in positions of responsibility e.g. prefects, buddies, school's council and helping out at lunchtime.

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

GRADE 1

Excellent provision is made for personal and collective worship supporting both the Religious Education curriculum and the liturgical year as appropriate. The provision is carefully matched to the different ages, abilities and interests of the pupils. The purposeful use of a range of teaching strategies, for example, dance, drama, music and ICT ensures that pupils are fully engaged and this is a strength.

Prayer and collective worship are seen as essential elements of religious experience and are integral to the life of this happy and purposeful community. Assemblies and liturgies are planned to relate directly to the pupils' own lives, thereby giving them a meaningful context, whilst also recognising the individuality of faith journey and varying spiritual experiences of the pupils. There is a common structure to such celebrations, which give pupils in a liturgical form, an understanding of gathering, listening, responding and going forth. In this way pupils are invited to become personally involved, thus enabling them to grow in their faith and celebrate their many God given talents through the teaching strategies adopted. Pupils are given very good opportunities to experience a variety of prayer forms including reflective prayer, spontaneous prayer, their own written prayers and the traditional prayers of the Church. All classes have a focal area for prayer and these are relevant to the pupils and clearly part of the prayer life of the class. Displays of work and information around the school are, likewise, supportive of the curriculum.

Good use is made of the adjacent parish church whenever possible. A Year 6 Mass was marked by the pupils' reverence. The pupils participated well with good singing and reading. They were comfortable reading aloud, which they did with great clarity. This

could be further enhanced if paced a little more slowly. The Year 6 pupils supported in a very mature way participation in the Mass by reception pupils, who at the time of the offertory procession, brought flowers to the altar. Parents are always welcome to school liturgies and Masses, and attend in very good numbers. The school is very keen to further foster involvement with the parish priest who interacted so very well with the Year 6 pupils at the Mass. He drew from them a greater understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in their lives as they grow up and experience change. A school assembly was marked by an extended period of reflection, which was well supported by the good use of pictures displayed on the interactive whiteboard. The year 5/4 class led an assembly well. The message about saying, 'Thank You', was clearly articulated through a short role play and the sharing of pupils' own experiences. In an infant assembly, on the theme of The Ascension, there were high levels of participation. Very effective use was made of role play, a colourful representation of the word Ascension, singing with actions and participation by the adults present. The assembly concluded with a question for ongoing reflection and was marked by prayers with responses.

As one parent wrote, *"St Bartholomew's is a wonderful school which always aims to encourage the pupils to become involved in the church. They always celebrate the religious festivals with fantastic assemblies and Masses to which we are all invited."*

Community cohesion

GRADE 1

The school articulates very laudable aims for the area of community cohesion, where it states, *'We believe, as a school that we can influence the cohesion of society by ensuring that we provide an education that equips our children to be responsible citizens and to make a positive contribution to the school community and to the parish and wider community. The pupils are guided towards inclusion by being nurtured and counselled that reconciliation is the key part of inclusion and behaviour, consistent with gospel values'* and to their credit the provision made, provides every opportunity for this to be achieved.

St Bartholomew's was noted as an inclusive school at the time of its last inspection and this remains as secure as ever. It is an inclusive school that sets out to give every opportunity to all. This is actively promoted and monitored. Provision mapping is undertaken and the success of programmes is reviewed. The school has systematically pursued the development of its Access Policy and actively encourages involvement of pupils and their families with home visits before the children arrive at EYFS. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the development of the school curriculum and in supporting their children's homework. Extended opportunities are provided for the pupils in the form of clubs and parents are signposted to the availability of breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and other facilities available in the community.

The school prepares pupils well to adapt to demands of the changing world, to show respect for other cultures and religious beliefs, equipping them for their future life.

The school is an integral part of the Parish of the Holy Apostles, Swanley and the Swanley Council of Churches. Pupils are taught and encouraged to understand others and be aware of other opinions, feelings and anxieties. This proactively encourages an understanding of the beliefs of others, their cultures and traditions, along with the importance of helping to have regard for these differences and challenge prejudice. They promote through spiritual development an awareness of soul and a view of life beyond the here and now. Pupils, parents and carers from different backgrounds work and interact well together.

The school is well supported by Cluster provision of services. It frequently gains access for groups of pupils, to secondary school sports and technology facilities. Having a teacher

who is the lead teacher for Gifted and Talented in the Cluster is enriching. The school has recently engaged in Cluster training for lunchtime supervision, First Aid and Speech Therapy and has been able to raise concerns at Cluster Based Reviews. The school is proactive in promoting the personal development and wellbeing of learners. In addition to their SEN and G&T provision and tracking systems for those who are vulnerable, they are involved with Healthy Schools and the Dartford Sports Partnership with other strong ties in outside agencies to support the needs of learners and introduce new opportunities for them. The school's work in the local community takes account of ethnic, faith and socio-economic diversity, so that learners develop an understanding of different types of people. The school is effective in ensuring equal opportunities for all, to succeed by removing barriers from access in participation, in learning and wider activities eliminating variations in outcomes for different groups. Pupils are quick to show concern for the wellbeing of others, especially the weak and vulnerable. Pupils are encouraged to assume greater levels of responsibility as they move through the school by taking on roles such as, buddies, and membership of the school council. Relationships in the school and beyond are among its outstanding features. The pupils have exposure to other faiths during their annual July faith week in which each class undertakes research on a nominated faith.

The school has close links with a local Church of England Primary School and Class 4 undertakes a visit to a Gurdwara and Class 4/5 go to Canterbury Cathedral. Year 6 visited St. Georges Cathedral with the Deanery Catholic Schools.

The school is generously active in supporting a range of charities which are wisely selected to have resonance with pupils which are exemplified through their motto '*Clothes on backs and protection for feet*', highlighted on a charity display. These include, Cabrini, Heaven Homes in Freedom South Africa (to which the school has a direct link), Diabetes research, An Indian Parish, Toilet Twinning and CAFOD. The school recently raised £4000 utilising cross curricular links through a sponsored spell and times tables.

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Religious Education

Achievement and standards in Religious Education

GRADE 2

On entry to the school pupils understanding and achievement are broadly in line with age related expectations, but a growing number have poorly developed language and communication skills. The school is aware that a significant number of pupils present with no declared faith and the number of pupils with little or no knowledge or experience of the Catholic faith has grown in recent years. A number of these pupils are, however, from traditional Catholic families, i.e. grandparent or one parent Catholic. The school is working with the parish through the RCIC / RCIA programmes, children's liturgy and para-liturgy as well as the sacramental programmes, with the aim of drawing some of these children towards baptism in the Catholic Church. The situation does have an impact upon pupils' knowledge that can be assumed. Catechesis is part of what the school sees as its mission and is a strength of the school.

It is highly commendable that that from these starting points pupils in the early years gain a firm foundation for future learning in Religious Education through a warm, positive, supportive, environment that successfully seeks to meet the needs of a widely spiritually diverse community. The strong Catholic ethos has in no way been diluted, being enshrined in the school's mission statement, which influences all aspects of school life and has a positive impact on the quality of education. This was articulated by a non-Catholic pupil discussing the Catholic ethos of the school who commented, "Everyone is part of God so I do not feel any different." Progress continues throughout Key Stage 1 where pupils build on their progress through rich curriculum provision that develops good religious vocabulary, knowledge and understanding.

The school's consistent approach provides a clear curriculum framework for teachers, with teachers utilising their own creativity to enhance the learning. As pupils move through upper Key Stage Two they are able to engage in debate, undertake research and utilise a range of Biblical texts. By the end of Year 6 the majority of pupils reach age related expectations with some exceeding this.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

GRADE 2

The teaching in lessons observed was consistently good. In the best lessons teachers were seen to take risks through hot seating, role play, and response partners. The stronger lessons were supplemented with a variety of activities that confirmed the Catholic nature of the lessons. Teaching and learning are good in their impact on pupils' achievement. Very high expectations throughout the school, of behaviour, coupled with warm supportive relationships help to create a productive atmosphere in classes, which have an audible 'learning buzz' about them. Teachers' classroom management skills are of a high order and pupils rise to expectations, showing keenness to work hard. Lessons are carefully planned to build on previous knowledge and are relevant to the pupils' abilities and interests. Classroom support assistants are extremely well deployed and their discreet but targeted knowledgeable support is to be commended for the enhancement it brings to the learning environment. Vulnerable groups are particularly well served by this support. Good use is made of imaginative approaches involving, 'freeze framing', talk partners, group working, individual tasks and good open ended questioning. This all serves to give pupils confidence to ask "Why?" Teachers are in turn able to develop confident answers as a result of the growing strength of their subject knowledge. This is developed through in-school support and good access to CPD. Summative marking is consistent throughout the school with elements of developmental marking evident in some classes providing pupils with clarity in regard to their next steps. This good practice could now be usefully disseminated across all classes. The school is currently matching its assessment processes

to the recently introduced 'Come and See' scheme. It has also piloted a conferencing system of assessment through pupil discussion and this shows considerable merit and plans are in place to explore this approach further.

In a Year 1 lesson, pupils learning was supported by a very affirmative approach adopted by the teacher whose classroom management skills were of a high order. She set high expectations to which the pupils rose. The lesson on the topic of The Ascension was well paced with good use made of talk partners and follow up discussion. Pupils could be afforded a little longer to formulate their ideas and construct responses. Support staff were discreet in supporting pupils but clearly enhanced their learning. A Year 1/2 lesson on the same topic demonstrated pupils ability to move smoothly from a period of reflection to an animated session on religious symbols. Pupils' learning was reinforced by the teachers probing questions, for example "Why is the Cross such a special sign?", which drew out further understanding. A pupil took on the role of Jesus in a hot seating exercise and ably responded to a range of thoughtful questions including "Why can't we see you when you are in heaven?" Very effective use of music was made in this lesson which took pupils learning on through strong differentiation using different activities. A Year 4 class benefitted from the teacher utilising the 'Wednesday Word' in the lesson as a resource for Biblical texts, in addition to linking previous learning in a past assembly. The high expectations set by teachers were further evidenced in a Year 6/5 lesson that took as its learning intention 'To know how lives can be transformed by the Holy Spirit'. Where cross curricular links, such as PHSE are developed, as in a Year 3 lesson seen, care needs to be taken to maintain the Religious Education focus and spirituality element.

The Religious Education curriculum

GRADE 2

The school sees appropriate Religious Education curriculum provision as a priority and sees its starting point as being in the statement, *'Walking alongside parents and carers and encouraging them to practice home faith is a priority for us and we are proactive in this area'*. It has adopted the revised version of the 'Here I Am' scheme, 'Come and See'. There is a well-established programme for Education for Personal Relationships (EPR) including provision for Sex Education that is thoughtfully linked to the Religious Education curriculum. Parents feel well informed and assisted in supporting their children at home in regard to the curriculum. In line with national guidance at least 10% of curriculum time is allocated to Religious Education.

The curriculum is well planned, endeavours to make learning exciting and relevant for all pupils regardless of ability. A focus is given to promoting the pupils' all round development by relating it directly to their own experiences and through recognition of the need to develop home knowledge also. Cross curricular links are well developed being most notable in the area of Literacy.

Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by adults and as a result of well-targeted and managed support, make very good progress. Parents expressed confidence in the school's Religious Education, how it deals with other faiths and its links to the school's EPR programme.

Leadership and management of Religious Education

GRADE 2

Inspection evidence gathered judges the leadership and management of Religious Education to be developing very strongly under the two recently appointed Religious Education coordinators who demonstrated great skill and enthusiasm for the roles they have taken on. Since the last inspection the leadership and management of Religious

Education has been appropriately distributed to two staff on a Key Stage basis. As a result, a very collegiate approach to this subject has been established that has in no way diminished what continues to be very strong subject coordination. The coordinators' file, along with all the other evidence seen is extremely well organised and presented. It is notable for evidencing clarity of vision, a well-planned future pathway for the subject and determination to maintain and build on the school's current strengths.

The Religious Education co-ordinators provide strong leadership and a clear vision for Religious Education in the school. They are ensuring it has a high profile across the school and is recognised as a core subject. Through lesson observations, sampling of books and moderating work, they have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in their subject area. All developments are discussed and feature in action plans with clear time lines.

Religious Education is well resourced. Books, DVDs and artefacts have been chosen wisely. The new Religious Education scheme has been well resourced with a full range of stories and music having been placed on every teacher's computer. The Religious Education coordinators are well supported by the headteacher, governors and the school's senior leadership. They have a coherent vision for the development of all aspects of the Catholic life of the school with a strong focus on raising standards and promoting the personal development of learners. There continues to be a very strong capacity to improve further.

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