



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection Report

ST. BENEDICT'S CATHOLIC ACADEMY

Part of the Holy Spirit Multi-Academy Company
Church Walk, Atherstone, Warwickshire CV9 1PS

Inspection dates: 5th & 6th March 2018
Lead Inspector: Mr T J Hughes

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:**Good**

Catholic Life:

Outstanding

Religious Education:

Good

Collective Worship:

Good

*Overall effectiveness at previous inspection:**Good*

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

This is a Good Catholic school because:

- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. St Benedict's is a family with God at the centre where everyone is welcomed, loved, respected and supported to achieve their very best.
- Collective Worship at St Benedict's is good. Pupils and adults are reverent, reflective and sincere in all aspects of their worship together.
- Religious Education at St Benedict's is good. High quality teaching, underpinned by good planning, enables the enthusiastic pupils to find inspiration in the Religious Education curriculum and make good progress.

It is not yet Outstanding because:

- Not enough pupils express themselves when writing in Religious Education as well as they do in English.
- Opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and deliver Collective Worship are not fully provided across the age groups.
- Governors need to develop a more strategic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

FULL REPORT

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the opportunities for extended writing in Religious Education that enable pupils to communicate their spiritual responses more fully and achieve the good level of expressive writing seen in English.
- Develop the strategy for the delivery of Collective Worship, so that pupils across all age groups have more opportunities to plan, lead and deliver prayer and worship.
- Develop governors' strategic role in the monitoring of St Benedict's as a Catholic school.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the Catholic Life of the school.	Outstanding
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	Outstanding
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	Outstanding
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.	Good

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

- The mission statement sits at the heart of the school family - In Love We Learn, In Faith We Grow. It is well understood by pupils, who spontaneously refer to it when discussing their work, play and relationships. The whole school begin many of their celebrations of worship with a moving rendition of an especially composed hymn which has the words of the mission statement at its centre.
- Behaviour at St Benedict's is excellent. Very good relationships and respect provide a foundation for hard work and care in all activities. The academy directors recognise with pride how the prior, passive behaviour of the pupils has evolved in the past three years and they acknowledge that pupils are now engaged and inquisitive, whilst retaining very sound attitudes to learning.
- The contribution that the pupils make to the Catholic Life of the school is impressive. They are reflective and enquiring and show a strong sense of personal worth and respect for others.
- Pupils clearly understand their beliefs and spiritual values and are confident in asking searching questions in order to gain a deeper level of understanding. They are independent and recognise the importance of their opinions and their responsibilities to each other.
- The pupils consider the school as sensitive to their needs; they see this as a true strength, as it gives rise to a community where they feel cared for and safe and

are given the opportunity to make the very best of themselves, no matter the challenges they face.

- The pupils gain a great deal from the opportunities to observe role models in different settings. For example, the pupils have been inspired by visiting charity workers and recognised how they live out their faith in their work. Many pupils have benefitted from visits to Alton Castle, where retreats have had a significant spiritual impact.
- The chaplaincy team, which includes pupils from a range of age groups, supports the Catholic Life of the school by developing the spiritual environment and leading prayer. Furthermore, their discussions are alive with debate about faith and how the mission of the school can benefit all.
- The pupils' knowledge of and empathy with deprived global communities is sharpened by their work with a range of sensitive projects including the 'Chinthowa Project', which focuses on sustainable development for orphans in Malawi.
- The talented and developing staff team are totally united in promoting the school's mission and bringing it alive for the pupils. As a result, the experiences for all pupils are spiritually rich and supportive, helping them, whatever their needs, to thrive and realise success in all aspects of life.
- The senior leaders, school staff and governors have worked diligently to establish and consolidate the school's Catholic ethos. As a result, everyone understands and invests in the Catholic Life of the school. Prayer is sincere; worship inclusive and uplifting; the curriculum thought provoking and spiritual; and the school environment bears witness to the living faith of each pupil and adult.
- The Catholic Life of St Benedict's is visible around the school in a rich variety of ways. Pupils of all ages are influenced and engaged in their faith. Each class is named after a key element of faith linked with St Benedict himself or a place of spiritual significance in the Archdiocese. This makes pupils aware of their Catholic heritage.
- Pupils' perceptions of the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile, and the way they respond to the many religious artefacts and prayer areas around the school, demonstrate their respectful awareness of spirituality.
- Pupils have a limited but developing understanding of vocation. In order to strengthen the pupils' awareness, the senior leaders should plan and deliver activities, which illustrate the concept of 'vocation'.
- The senior leaders are working hard to ensure consistency of chaplaincy provision for the school. A number of inspiring visiting priests celebrate Mass and Collective Worship, ensuring a deep understanding of the liturgical year and maintaining support for the programmes of sacramental preparation.
- In its developmental role, The Holy Spirit Multi-Academy Company (MAC) has designed a meaningful and effective programme for pupils' understanding of relationships and sex education, which is in line with the requirements of the Birmingham Diocese and acknowledges advice from the Bishop's Conference.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.

- The principal has a clear vision for the school, which is motivated by her faith and belief in the dignity of each person. She sees her primary purpose as caring for each person within the school family and supporting them as they grow.
- The firm maintenance of the Catholic Life of the school is due to the rigorous monitoring, strategic management and relentless hard work of the principal, Religious Education subject leader, staff, governors and academy directors.
- The strong and professional relationships between the principal, Religious Education subject leader and academy directors has been key to the improvements made in the Catholic Life of the school.
- Parents are very well informed about all aspects of the school's Catholic Life. The newsletters and website are alive with reflections and information about the spiritual journey the school is taking. Parents engage in a dialogue with the school about matters of faith and are happy to share their views through questionnaires.
- Three years ago, the senior school leaders, together with the executive principal and academy directors, strategically identified that the school required greater depth in its Catholic Life. The senior team set about improving the school environment, inspiring spiritual thinking and responses in the pupils, and coaching staff in promoting the mission of the school. This drive for enhancing the quality of the Catholic Life is on-going and the school continues to grow in faith.
- The Catholic Life of the school is continually monitored by senior leaders and a termly review is undertaken which contributes to an action plan. Leaders ensure that all members of the staff team are aware of the points for action and, during staff training, improvements to the Catholic Life are put in place.
- The governors are committed to, and delight in, the sacred nature of the school. In order to strengthen monitoring of Catholic Life at a local level, training for governors should be delivered, so that they have a better grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of St Benedict's as a Catholic school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of Religious Education.	Good
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	Good
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	Good

**How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.**

- Given the low starting points of pupils' Religious Education knowledge when entering the school, the pupils make good progress over time and achieve very well.
- There are no significant differences in the achievement of particular groups or phases. Year on year pupils grow in knowledge of the Faith and improve their skills.
- Through assessment for learning, the school is addressing any cohort specific achievement issues. For example, where the pace of progress for certain pupils in a particular year group has not been in line with others, school leaders have put in place targeted interventions, such as deploying teachers with expertise and allocating the support of teaching assistants.
- The pupils enjoy Religious Education, they take particular pleasure in stories from the Gospels and have impressive knowledge of scripture. They fully embrace the Gospels and can draw on themes that link the work of Jesus to their lives today.
- Pupils relish the rich Religious Education curriculum and enjoy exploring the themes and imagery of the liturgical year, the lives of saints and the structures of the Church. They also respectfully embrace ideas and information about other world faiths and can make empathetic emotional links with the beliefs of the global family.
- Pupils' English writing skills are not used fully in Religious Education lessons, as there are not enough extended writing opportunities which allow pupils to express their spiritual ideas and reflections.
- The teaching of Religious Education is consistently good or better.
- The good quality teaching is achieved through teachers' thoughtful questioning, the well-established routines for learning and the many inspired ideas that teachers use to engage the pupils.
- Teachers are skilled in the way they use resources. Religious Education lessons are enlivened by vivid pictures, appropriate and accessible texts and a range of artefacts which inspire the pupils' thinking and responses.
- The pupils' work and development of skills are supported by an effective approach to teachers' dialogue and marking. In lessons, the staff and pupil discussions are meaningful and enriched by the teachers' good subject knowledge.
- The school has adopted the MAC's policy on marking. This is consistently applied across the school, understood fully by pupils and leads to pupils recognising when they have achieved a learning objective and where further work needs to be done.
- Teachers ensure that all pupils can access learning and make progress in lessons. Tasks are suited to pupils' needs and appropriate and vivid resources are used to engage pupils.
- Pupils are encouraged to consider their own needs and challenge themselves to improve further by being allowed to select their own particular level of task. As a result, progress in lessons is good.
- Team work in the classrooms is strong with teachers and teaching assistants working well together to support the pupils' development.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

- The senior leadership team undertakes analysis of the pupils' performance in Religious Education at all stages. This enables them to track progress and to identify targets for individual pupils, key cohorts and year groups. This assessment data is comprehensively shared with the staff team and governors. Pupil outcomes are carefully considered and appropriate progress targets for pupils and overall subject development are set.
- Although the school does not yet have a three-year trend of continuous improvement in achievement, standards are rising as a result of the strategic monitoring and delivery of Religious Education.
- Planned and regular lesson observations, work scrutinies and learning walks show that staff are committed to planning and delivering a high-quality curriculum. Lessons are relevant to pupils and develop the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to grow as Catholics in the world today.
- The collaborative work of Religious Education subject leaders across the Holy Spirit MAC allows for moderation of standards. This work provides an additional and broader perspective about the standards pupils are achieving in Religious Education.
- The principal, Religious Education subject leaders and MAC board members undertake lesson observations and follow these up with proactive discussion. The results of monitoring are shared with individual staff members and additionally at staff and academy meetings. The strengths and weaknesses identified are considered in the next round of planning.
- The Religious Education subject leader maintains very good monitoring records on the development and delivery of the subject. This monitoring effectively informs improvement planning and bears witness to the richness of Religious Education in the school.
- The work of all staff in providing good quality Religious Education is continuously reviewed. The school leaders coach staff with care and sensitivity. New staff are eager to develop their subject knowledge and skills and respond very well to training. As confidence in delivering Religious Education grows, school leaders should support newer members of staff in teaching a greater share of Religious Education lessons.
- As a result of evaluation of Religious Education provision, the MAC has developed policies to improve the Religious Education curriculum and its delivery.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The quality of Collective Worship.	Good
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.	Good
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	Good

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.**The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.**

- Collective Worship is central to the personal growth of every member of the school family.
- Pupils are always highly reverent and engaged during assembly and liturgy. They are exposed to and have a thorough knowledge of a variety of prayer experiences.
- As well as regular prayers during the structure of the school day, pupils participate in a range of prayer including liturgy at lunchtime, the use of prayer bags, retreats and hymn practice.
- Pupils are given a key stage prayer book to help them know and understand age appropriate prayers.
- Pupils have been inspired by the Collective Worship experienced during retreats or visits. They bring back to school ideas for prayers and sacred movement learnt at Alton Castle or on visits to St Chad's Cathedral.
- Very often Mass or assembly will begin with St Benedict's own mission hymn, which has been especially composed for the school and is sung with great joy and pride.
- Collective Worship is a shared experience from which the pupils gain a great deal. The relationships between the older and younger pupils are spontaneous and spiritually supportive. During whole school Mass, the Year 6 pupils sit beside their individual Reception Class prayer partners and respond together in the celebration.
- Furthermore, some older pupils lead an intimate lunchtime prayer experience for their younger friends to explore their faith together.
- There is a genuine enthusiasm on the part of many pupils to act as altar servers at Mass. The school and parish work well together to encourage the young people of the parish to participate and this in turn supports the celebration of Mass in school.
- The principal, Religious Education subject leader, staff and class groups lead assembly each week. They reflect on aspects of the liturgical year, explore key themes about saints and their Christian heritage and promote the virtues of the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile.
- Pupils are familiar with prayer being led by many different individuals. Increasingly, the older pupils are involved in planning and delivering liturgies. The chaplaincy team helps other pupils throughout the school to plan their own

liturgies. As a result, the pupils are confident in presenting and sharing their faith through prayer. Opportunities for the younger pupils to lead the liturgy are less frequent.

- Whole school Mass is celebrated with reverence and the full participation of all. Mass takes place in school and occasionally in church. Worship is enriched by enthusiastic singing and sacred movement. Pupils take a lead in reading the liturgy of the Word and bidding prayers. The attendance of parents, parishioners and governors help to make the occasion the highlight of the week.
- Collective Worship is presented with a high degree of expertise. The school has invested in inspirational resources and training for staff. As a result, Masses and assemblies flow well and the themes of the liturgy are illustrated with meaningful graphics.
- Sacramental preparation is developing well. The Holy Spirit MAC has composed and initiated a meaningful programme, which is embraced by both the school and the parish. Year 6 pupils preparing for Confirmation are inspired by the exploration of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, as well as their impressive discussion about their chosen saints.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

- Monitoring of Collective Worship takes many forms and involves all stakeholders. School leaders have compiled questionnaires for pupils and parents, which seek their views on the quality of worship. Furthermore, both staff and pupils review the school environment to assess the types of prayer available to the pupils.
- All members of the school family are informed of the prayers experienced by pupils and of key celebrations through the school newsletters and the attractive and user-friendly website. Parents are encouraged to provide feedback and keep in close contact with the school as the community grows in faith together.
- The evaluation of Collective Worship is shared termly with governors through reports and meetings with the link member for Religious Education. Conclusions drawn from these meetings are used to inform actions as the school develops Collective Worship.
- As the supportive parish priest is not able to attend the school at present, the senior staff have negotiated the support of visiting priests. These celebrants provide excellent input for liturgy and also give feedback to the staff and pupils on the depth of their prayer life. They also make suggestions as to how the school might improve liturgies.
- As a result of the strategic work undertaken in evaluating Collective Worship, the school leaders have planned and delivered helpful in-service training which has supported staff in designing and leading aspects of prayer and worship, both in class and in liturgical events, so that the school community continues to grow in faith.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Unique reference number	141812
Local authority	Warwickshire
<i>This inspection was carried out under canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the 2005 Education Act.</i>	
Type of school	Primary
School category	Multi-Academy Company
Age range	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	190
Appropriate authority	The board of directors
Chair	Jim Foley
Principal	Niki Furlong Smith
Telephone number	01827 712320
Website address	www.stbenedictsonline.co.uk
Email address	admin3501@we-learn.com
Date of previous inspection	5 th & 6 th March 2013

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- St Benedict's is a smaller than average size Catholic Primary School serving the parish of St. Benedict, Atherstone.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 48%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is below the national average.
- Attainment on entry is in line with the national average.
- Since the last inspection the school has joined The Holy Spirit Multi Academy Company and had a change of leadership.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors – Tim Hughes and Stephen Murphy.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspectors observed teaching across seven 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, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with the principal, the Religious Education subject leader, the Religious Education link governor, the executive principal and two academy board members and the visiting priest.
- The inspectors attended a whole school Mass, class Collective Worship and undertook learning walks to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, 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, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, the Religious Education action plan, teachers' planning and learning journals.