



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST BENEDICT'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL ATHERSTONE

Inspection date 5th - 6th March 2013
Reporting Inspector Dominic Collins

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	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr Bill Cullen
School address	Church Walk Atherstone CV9 1PS
Telephone number	01827 712320
E-mail address	admin3501@we-learn.com
Date of previous inspection	December 2007
DFE School number	937-3501
Unique Reference Number	125705

Headteacher Mrs Susan Shannon

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Evidence

The inspection was carried out by 1 Diocesan Inspector. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self-evaluation of religious education (RE) and Catholic life. To validate the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspector observed 4 full RE lessons 3 jointly with the headteacher. In addition the inspector completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. He held meetings with the school leadership, staff, and parents. He observed a whole school assembly and class based acts of worship and 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. He looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self-evaluation such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, minutes of meetings and learning journals.

Information about the school

St Benedict's is a smaller than average sized Catholic primary school located in the Atherstone area of Warwickshire and serves the parish of St Benedict. There are presently 164 pupils on roll of whom 75% are baptised Catholics. The children are admitted from a wide and diverse area and are predominantly of white British origin. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average. Due to retirement, a new headteacher was appointed in September 2012.

Main Finding

In its self-evaluation the school judges that the quality of its Catholic life and religious education are good. Evidence obtained during the course of the inspection confirms that these judgements are fully justified and are further strengthened by the accurate identification of areas in need of review and development. The new leadership has already taken swift action to address this by communicating a clear vision of RE development that is shared and implemented by all staff. The school monitoring and evaluation processes for RE and Catholic life have been updated and refined, thus creating a refreshing and effective practice for school self-evaluation, which is already having a positive impact on pupil progress. It is evident that members of the governing body are very involved; they are knowledgeable, supportive and challenging. The school leadership and governors work in close liaison and together form a powerful combination to take the school forward.

School self evaluation

St Benedict's school self-evaluation is impressive in its detail and comprehensive analysis and presents an accurate appraisal of the quality of its Catholic life and RE provision. These positive outcomes correctly identify areas of strength and those in need of review, thus providing the information necessary to plan for future development in order to move the school forward. The new school leadership is passionate about developing all aspects of RE and Catholic life within the school community and although recently appointed, there is strong evidence that refinements have already been made and new systems put into place that are already having a positive effect. For example, in addition to the existing day to day practices, the school is currently developing a formal framework to determine the quality of its Catholic life, including pupil voice discussions, questionnaires, audits and focused observations. These initiatives are successfully impacting on the Catholic character of the school which is reflected in its distinctive

Catholic ethos. The school plans to further promote the spiritual development of the children through the implementation of parental RE workshops.

The school has a full complement of governors. They are well led and organised by the newly appointed chair and are fully involved in the life of the school. There is a broad base of expertise among its membership and therefore, while being fully supportive, they are able to offer an appropriate level of challenge to hold the school to account. The link governor meets termly with the RE co-ordinator and there is clear evidence to confirm that governors make a significant contribution to the evaluation of Catholic life and RE. This is further strengthened by targets the governors have set for themselves, that include a focus on teaching and learning, Catholic ethos and improved communication strategies. These are linked to the school development plan and promote a healthy working partnership with the headteacher and her staff, each of whom have an RE target included within their performance review.

The school judges the provision and quality of collective worship to be good and evidence seen during the inspection fully justifies this view. Prayer and worship underpins the Catholic life of the school. Children are at ease when praying and they clearly enjoy the many opportunities they have to pray together; voluntary lunchtime stations of the cross during Lent for example. The school environment has been enhanced to reflect and promote the Catholic life of the school including a dedicated prayer area, bright, informative RE displays and a clear prayer focus in every classroom displaying pupils' prayers and petitions. The excellent initiative of younger pupils paired with an older pupil permeates a range of activities linking the Gospel values to our daily lives, not only through prayer but also in the way children build positive relationships, are sensitive to those around them and the understanding that their actions influence others. The school staff are excellent role models and know the children well. Their guidance and encouragement is highly effective in supporting pupils on their faith journey. Monitoring and evaluation of prayer and collective worship is thorough, combining a range of formal and informal strategies that leadership is constantly seeking ways to improve and develop further.

The school judges the leadership of religious education to be good and this is fully supported by the evidence. The high quality provision and outcomes for RE are reflected in the excellent organisation and support to all members of staff by the RE subject leaders. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and sets high standards and expectations for the school community. Supported by her very able deputy, who shares the leadership of RE, they are passionate about developing the Catholic life of the school and together they successfully communicate a clear vision to promote and enrich it.

Pupils' progress and achievement are closely tracked across the school and excellent detailed records of data analysis are maintained and appropriately actioned. The RE subject leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning through scrutiny of lesson planning, RE lesson observations, and the quality and content of pupils' work. Careful records are kept and lesson feedback is shared with staff in a professional and constructive manner. For example lesson planning has been improved and a sharper, more focused model is uniformly used throughout the school. The accuracy of the lesson judgements made by the school is fully supported by the consistently high quality of lessons observed during the inspection.

The processes used in the school self-evaluation of its Catholic life and RE signal the emergence of a fresh, personalised, structured programme embracing a range of innovative strategies that, while building upon existing good practice, present an effective cycle of RE quality assurance. Although some are in the earlier stages of development,

because they are shared and consistently applied by all staff, there is clear evidence that a positive impact is already taking effect.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes for pupils in RE are excellent and there is evidence of a consistent momentum of improvement in their faith journey across each key stage. The evidence of RE baseline assessment reveal low levels of knowledge, understanding and a limited experience of the Catholic faith on entry to the Reception class. Staff communicate their faith through their enthusiasm and sound subject knowledge; consequently pupils receive high quality teaching that is consistently effective and this results in pupils making good progress. At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are working at or above average expectations. End of Key Stage 2 assessments show a significant rise in achievement matched to national expectations and outstanding progress in RE from low baseline levels. School self-evaluation has identified areas to further support this upward trend through focused planning, additional interventions and increased challenge for pupils.

Relationships throughout the school are excellent and consequently staff are very aware of pupils' individual needs and, because of the encouragement, religious experiences and opportunities they are able to share, their progress in knowledge and understanding continues to improve.

The contribution of pupils to the Catholic life of the school and collective worship and the extent to which they benefit from them are excellent. Collective worship is well planned and pupil response is very positive. They are attentive and reverent in prayer and are able to express their feelings thoughtfully and confidently when sharing prayer intentions together, show an understanding of different forms of prayer and worship and the importance it has in our daily lives. 'Prayer friends' are particularly effective here, especially in whole school settings and the duty is proudly undertaken by the older children.

St Benedict's is an inclusive school and the pastoral care of pupils is given the highest priority by all members of staff. The extremely positive ethos is one of happiness, unity and mutual respect. The children are fine ambassadors for the school. Their smart appearance reflects all they do, impressing by their initiative, positive attitudes and developing maturity. Pupils know how much they are valued as individuals and the responsibility they have, to show respect and care for each other. The school behaviour policy and anti-bullying policy, devised with parental consultation, is effective, understood by all pupils and consistently applied by all members of staff. As a result, the behaviour of pupils is exemplary.

Provision overall is excellent. Lessons observed during the inspection clearly demonstrate that pupils enjoy their learning in RE. They respond enthusiastically to the innovative and stimulating range of teaching strategies used. Good and some outstanding examples were characteristic of the high quality teaching of a rich, exciting and well focused curriculum, thus ensuring consistently good outcomes for the children. Support staff are very effective and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. The children have developed a positive work ethic and the quality of work recorded in RE books shows a personal pride and determination to achieve.

Strong school/parish links have been established and the parish catechist also engages with the school in the sacramental preparation. Parents are fully involved and work

¹ As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform to those of the school.

closely with the school and warmly acknowledge the care and encouragement their children receive. The quality of RE provision has a very positive impact on pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Recommendations

- Further develop a programme of visits into school for all governors to enhance their understanding of the Catholic life and ethos of the school and enable more focused governorship challenge.
- Develop children's ability to formulate, ask and discuss probing questions in order to promote a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith and other faith communities.
- Further develop a structured pupil participation in planning and leading collective worship.



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March 2013

Dear Parents and Carers

Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Benedict's Catholic Primary School, March 2013

I am writing this letter to share with you the findings of the diocesan inspection of your children's school. Diocesan inspection now explores in detail the school's own view of itself as expressed in its self-evaluation. For this reason, much of the report is more technical than used to be the case. You are still entitled to have a copy of the full report should you want one and it will be available on the school website or by request from the school office.

St Benedict's school has an excellent Catholic ethos and the level of care and encouragement your children receive from the headteacher and her staff allows them to develop as happy, confident learners. The Catholic mission of the school underpins all aspects of its daily life and the evidence of their attitudes, values and spiritual development is demonstrated by the way the children embrace it. The children are fine ambassadors, are courteous and friendly and clearly take pride in their school. The school evaluates its provision very effectively and has a very good capacity to develop further. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and make excellent progress in their religious education due to the consistently high quality teaching of a well focused and rich RE curriculum. The school is very well supported by an effective and committed governing body.

In order to broaden learning in RE, I have recommended that the school should further develop a programme of visits into school for all governors; develop children's ability to formulate, ask and discuss probing questions; further develop a structured pupil participation in planning and leading collective worship.

It was a pleasure to inspect St Benedict's school. I enjoyed my visit very much and was made most welcome by all. Your children are a credit to the school, to their families and those who care for them.

Yours sincerely,

Dominic Collins
Diocesan Inspector