



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection

ST MARY AND ST BENEDICT CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Leigh St, Hillfields, Coventry CV1 5HG

Inspection date 21st – 22nd June 2016
Reporting Inspector Denis Cody

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	309
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Elizabeth Hancock
Telephone number	0247 6229486
E-mail address	admin@stmary-stben.coventry.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	July 2011
DFE School Number	331/3010
Unique Reference Number	133556

Headteacher Mrs Pauline MacDonald

Previous inspection: 2

This inspection: 2

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



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 three RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lessons were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- 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, the headteacher, the RE subject leaders and parish priest.
- The inspectors attended a whole school Mass and an assembly 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.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' achievement and progress, RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals.

Information about the school

- St Mary and St Benedict is a larger than average size Catholic primary school serving the parish of the same name in the Hillfields area of Coventry.
- The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is much higher than the national average and has increased significantly since the last inspection.
- Currently 61% of pupils are baptised Catholics.
- It is situated in an area of significant social disadvantage.
- The number of pupils with special needs and/or disabilities is slightly below average.
- Attainment on entry is below the national average overall.
- A new RE leader was appointed in 2014 following the retirement of the previous postholder. An additional subject leader for RE was appointed at the beginning of this academic year, with responsibility for collective worship.
- Attached to the school is a nursery with 31 pupils.

Main Findings

- Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the vibrant Catholic life of the school.
- Collective worship is of a high standard, with effective leadership and excellent pupil involvement.
- Teaching in RE is consistently good. Pupils make very good progress from low starting points, and attainment is good for all groups.
- Monitoring, review and evaluation are effective and consistent processes by which school leaders know its strengths and areas for development and plan for improvement.
- School leaders at all levels show outstanding commitment to its Catholic life, collective worship and RE.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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

- The Catholic life of the school is characterised by the outstanding contribution made by pupils through their enthusiastic involvement and commitment. They respect the Catholic values and ethos of the school and are eager to fulfil the roles of leadership and responsibility made available to them.
- The pupil chaplaincy team plays an active part in all aspects of Catholic life. A small number of older pupils from the school are trained and supported by the chaplaincy team at Bishop Ullathorne Catholic Secondary School. They in turn deliver training to volunteers to establish their own school chaplaincy group, whose members contribute to Catholic life, for example by monitoring classroom prayer areas and helping prepare and lead worship throughout the school.
- The Gospel values incorporated into the life of the school are lived out in pupils' everyday behaviour and in their supportive and caring relationships and attitudes. Pupil behaviour records, including monitoring of follow up actions, show the positive impact of the school's Catholic life on pupils' understanding of how they should behave.
- The pupils benefit from the way the school mission statement, *"Together with Christ Everyone Achieves More,"* is embedded in the Catholic life of the school. It is displayed in each classroom and regularly referred to by staff and children as a yardstick to judge behaviour and actions.
- Pupil views are collected through interviews and questionnaires and through reports from the school council. These are taken into account by senior teachers and governors when undertaking school improvement planning.
- Pupils respond thoughtfully when questioned about their faith. They understand that we are all created equally and have a responsibility to support and help others.
- Governors, senior leaders and staff attach the highest priority to ensuring the school provides a vibrant and good quality Catholic life for its pupils and all its community.
- The school community respects and values the Catholic life of the school. Governors, teachers and pupils all understand that its Catholic life and faith are central to everything the school does and they each have a contribution to make. Both governors and staff attend school Masses and fully support the process of sacramental preparation.
- The school actively promotes its ethos and faith through close links with the local community of Catholic schools, collaborating together and sharing good practice. For example one of the subject leaders has taken responsibility for running the Twitter account for the Coventry Catholic Schools Partnership.
- Training and support for staff in understanding and promoting Catholic life is given a high priority. They took part in a joint inset and retreat with other Catholic schools on the Year of Mercy and positive feedback from this has led to the planning of another joint retreat at the beginning of next academic year. In addition, several members of staff either hold or are currently studying for the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.

- The school has strong links with the parish, and the parish priest provides good support for the faith life of the school through school Masses and involvement in sacramental preparation.
- The Catholic ethos of the school is reflected in its emphasis on pastoral care for its pupils and support for families. For example it provides a weekly Rainbows support group with trained staff for children who have experienced significant loss in their lives.
- Pupils' response to and participation in collective worship is good. They take part enthusiastically in school and parish Masses, school assemblies and acts of worship, behaving reverently and responding thoughtfully and appropriately.
- Through the chaplaincy group, many older pupils are able to make an excellent contribution to collective worship throughout the school. They help prepare and deliver prayer services and acts of worship for their peers and for younger pupils. For example, at different times of the year they lead prayer and worship services, such as the rosary, during lunchtimes.
- The pupil chaplaincy team is also involved in monitoring collective worship. They have interviewed pupils, staff, governors and parishioners, and filmed people's reactions following Stations of the Cross in order to collect feedback.
- Key Stage 2 pupils have experience of planning and leading worship for their classes, for younger pupils and for the whole school community. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are able to contribute to the setting up of prayer spaces and participate actively in prayers. In its areas for development, the school has identified the need to develop pupils' skills in planning and leading liturgy.
- Pupils confidently use scripture, different styles of prayer, artefacts and music appropriate to the liturgical season or theme in planning worship activities. They are confident and experienced in the use of informal, personal prayers as well as traditional prayers.
- Provision of collective worship is good. Acts of worship reflect and celebrate feast days, liturgical seasons and sacramental celebrations. Carefully planned and led by experienced teachers worship enhances the Catholic life of the school and supports the development of pupils' spirituality.
- A strong feature of the school's Catholic life are the '*Holy Times*' – short prayer services which are timetabled to take place somewhere in the school each day. Sometimes they are planned and led by pupils and on occasions prepared and delivered by older children to younger classes.
- Through its worship, the school fosters links with the wider Catholic community. Its weekly school Mass is the parish Mass of the day and is attended by parishioners. Parents are encouraged to attend school Masses and assemblies and the school plans to hold workshops next year to encourage greater parental involvement in school worship.
- Children also take part in worship alongside those from other Catholic schools. This year with other schools in their cluster they led the Vocations Mass for all Catholic schools in Coventry.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development is good and is reflected in their positive and supportive attitudes, behaviour and relationships.

- Children learn about the life and teachings of Jesus and of our calling to help and support others. They are able to talk about their faith and beliefs and are aware of how our everyday lives and actions are influenced by our beliefs.
- Pupils readily assume positions of responsibility in the school and roles in which they provide service to others, for instance school council posts and membership of the chaplaincy team in which they organise activities to raise money in support of charitable causes. Year 6 children volunteer as 'squaddies,' and are allocated to classes across the school, supporting younger children in assemblies and in the playground at lunchtimes.
- As part of the school's response to the Year of Mercy, a junior SVP group, 'Mini Vinnies,' has been established to enable pupils to fulfil their obligation of service to others. This has proved very popular as a focus for charitable activities and fund-raising, for example organising collection and delivery of donations for a local food bank.
- The school's provision for pupils' development of Catholic Christian values is excellent. For several years it has promoted Catholic values through its curriculum and collective worship. Pupils are familiar with them and they have become integrated into the life of the school, reflected for example in the classroom behaviour rules adopted by pupils.
- These values are now being integrated with the new diocesan programme relating to Catholic values and virtues.

Leadership

Leadership of Catholic life and Collective Worship

- Senior leaders and governors show an outstanding commitment to supporting and promoting the Catholic life of the school and ensuring it impacts positively on the life and learning of pupils.
- Pupil voice interviews and parent questionnaires are used systematically by senior leaders to collect views on the Catholic life of the school, to measure its impact and provide data which can be used to inform future provision. Parent feedback has resulted in changes to how the sacramental preparation programme is organised and delivered.
- In order to enhance its quality senior leaders have carried out a review and update of Catholic life in the school. Staff retreat days have been organised and evaluations of Catholic life are shared in staff briefings.
- As part of their review of Catholic life senior leaders have developed a new central resource area and provided new resources for staff and pupils.
- Governors are a regular and visible presence in the school, both formally and informally, overseeing and participating in its Catholic life. They liaise with RE subject leaders and visit the school, carrying out learning walks to monitor aspects of Catholic life and view first-hand how children engage with its spiritual and prayer life. Their observations and suggestions are reported at governor meetings and contribute to improvement planning.
- The governors have established a Catholic life committee which oversees all aspects of Catholic life, receiving and evaluating monitoring data and reports from the headteacher and RE subject leaders. This committee is still in its first year but it

indicates the governors' commitment to formal monitoring and assessment of Catholic life as the basis for improvement planning.

- Catholic life is a standing item on the headteacher's termly report to governors, discussing developments, evaluation and future planning. All policies are approved by governors to ensure they reflect the school's Catholic ethos, and they hold senior leaders to account to ensure policies and procedures are robust.
- Governors ensure the school improvement plan and performance management for senior staff are linked to aspects of developing the Catholic life of the school. The school improvement plan is agreed by the governors and, together with subject leader action plans, is reviewed termly. Progress towards success criteria is carefully monitored and governors are kept informed.
- Collective worship in the school is carefully organised and monitored. The appointment, this year, of a second RE subject leader with specific responsibility for collective worship indicates the high priority given to this aspect of Catholic life.
- Since this appointment, school leaders have produced a new school policy for collective worship, which included an overview of assemblies and Masses. New resources and templates for planning worship have been introduced and are having a positive impact on the quality of class and school worship.
- School leaders have enhanced the quality and experience of school worship for both pupils and staff. They have introduced new hymns and music for pupils through regular hymn practices and enabled staff to take it in turns to lead worship at weekly staff briefings.
- Staff training has also taken place this year to develop confidence and proficiency in planning and delivery of collective worship, and to ensure it reflects the liturgical calendar and is progressive throughout the school.
- Governors attend school Masses, assemblies and prayer times and can carry out formal and informal observations and monitoring of worship and pupil attitudes and responses. 'Holy Times' are monitored by the headteacher who provides feedback and development points to teachers.
- As is the case with Catholic life generally, feedback from pupils and parents is collected through interviews and questionnaires and can be used by school leaders in improvement planning. The school improvement plan for this year includes provision of greater opportunities for pupils and families to take part together in prayer and worship.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education

- Religious education is well led by the headteacher and two subject leaders, overseen and supported by the governing body. They are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development through regular and secure monitoring procedures.
- Improvement planning is supported by the school leaders' links with the diocese and other Catholic schools. Developmental ideas and strategies are disseminated and shared at Catholic partnership meetings attended by the headteacher and at diocesan cluster meetings attended by the RE subject leaders. Ideas are brought

back to school and shared at staff meetings and through training sessions as appropriate.

- In partnership with a local Catholic Teaching School, one of the subject leaders has helped develop effective RE assessment procedures for this and other schools and is involved in planning professional development opportunities for teachers new to Catholic schools.
- Governors are directly involved in self-evaluation activities such as learning walks and pupil interviews which can contribute to improvement planning.
- The governors' quality and standards committee reviews the attainment and achievement of pupils and analyses data to monitor the performance of vulnerable groups.
- This year has seen the introduction of a significant number of positive initiatives for development both in terms of Catholic life and RE. Their full impact cannot yet be evaluated, but should be included in future reviews.
- The school improvement plan is collaboratively produced by staff and governors based on priorities for improvement identified through self-evaluation. These include targets and objectives for Catholic life and RE which are developed into action plans by the subject leaders who subsequently oversee their application in school.
- A new RE self-evaluation document has been adopted this year, led by the headteacher with the involvement of RE leaders and the Catholic life committee. It has not yet become established as a fully collaborative instrument at the heart of review, evaluation and improvement planning for all aspects of Catholic life and RE.
- Attainment records, including baseline assessment, compiled over time show that from low starting points almost all pupils make rapid and sustained progress and attain well. Standards of attainment in RE have risen since the last inspection, with more pupils reaching the levels expected in the diocesan Curriculum Strategy.
- Analysis of pupil attainment data in each class has been carried out this year by senior leaders to identify and compare the performance of different groups of pupils. However full use has not been made of this analysis throughout the year. Class teachers have not been sufficiently involved in the process to enable them to use the results to adapt their planning or teaching strategies effectively in response to the needs of specific groups of pupils.
- Evidence from lesson observations shows good pupil engagement in RE lessons, and pupils themselves report that they enjoy RE. They are able to engage in debate, ask questions and respond thoughtfully to challenging questions.
- The quality of teaching in RE is good, and some lessons are outstanding. Children receive the same degree of challenge in RE as in other subjects and their work is of a comparable standard.
- School leaders monitor the quality of teaching through lesson observations, overview of staff planning, termly scrutiny of pupils' work and pupil voice, all of which involve developmental feedback and sharing of good practice.
- To promote high standards of teaching, staff have received training on the diocesan strategy and the use of RE attainment levels. Opportunities are provided, both in school and in other schools within the Catholic cluster, for teachers to observe one another teach and so share individual strengths and good practice.

- To ensure the accuracy and consistency of teachers' judgements regarding pupil attainment they have taken part this year in moderation activities, using the attainment levels, both within phases and as a whole school.
- Teachers ensure pupils are directly involved in their own learning. They are made aware of the success criteria and key points of learning for the work they are doing, and they know how they are performing and what they need to do to improve.
- Good use is made of assessment throughout the school to support teaching and promote learning. The use of attainment levels is now embedded in teaching and lesson planning.
- Teachers promote successful learning by using effective questioning during lessons and providing pupils with developmental feedback in their marking.
- Lessons are well-planned and engage pupils' interest, making imaginative use of ICT and deploying teaching assistant support to good effect.
- Assessment of pupils' work is carried out in accordance with diocesan recommendations enabling pupil progress to be tracked over time and contributing to curriculum review and teaching assessment. Assessment grids for RE are attached to all exercise books to support the assessment process.
- The curriculum effectively promotes pupils' learning. It is adapted and enhanced by senior leaders to ensure it communicates Catholic faith and beliefs and meets the needs of pupils and their families.
- The diocesan RE strategy, '*Learning and Growing as the People of God*' is fully implemented as part of the school's RE curriculum. Use of the strategy's planning structure and monitoring of teachers' planning ensure there is appropriate progression and development of RE teaching throughout the school.
- Curriculum timetables ensure that the time allocation for RE is in line with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- The curriculum emphasises Catholic virtues and values and provides opportunities for spiritual, moral and vocational development.
- The curriculum has been adapted to meet Catholic initiatives such as the Year of Mercy which has a visible presence around the school in the form of posters and a symbolic '*Door of Mercy*' in the main hall. It is also introduced to pupils through classroom discussions, assemblies and prayer services.
- The school has a well-established education for relationships policy which is shared with parents and delivered within the context of Catholic teaching and ethos.
- In its curriculum the school does not place sufficient emphasis on learning about other faiths and cultures. This has been identified as a target for development in school self- review.

Recommendations

- The school should carry out and make use of extended analysis of RE data with greater involvement of class teachers and RE subject leaders.
- The new self evaluation document, with input from school leaders, governors and staff, should be incorporated into the improvement planning process for all aspects of Catholic life and RE.