

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

BISHOP PARKER CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Barton Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK2 3BT

URN: 110481

DfES School No: 826/3377

Head Teacher: Mrs C Donohue
Chair of Governors: Mrs L Sumpter

Reporting Inspector: Mrs P O'Byrne
Associate Inspector: Mrs M Shinkwin

Date of Inspection: 4th July 2012

Date Report Issued: 18th July 2012

Date of previous Inspection: 17th June 2009

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and
in partnership with Milton Keynes Local Authority

Information about the school

Bishop Parker Catholic School is a one-form primary school with nursery situated in Bletchley. The school is one of two serving the parish of St Thomas Aquinas and neighbouring socially disadvantaged areas in Milton Keynes. There are 228 children on roll of whom 67% are Catholic. The school also has a similar percentage of Catholic members of staff, four of whom have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. Pupils' attainment on entry is below the national norm and EAL and SEN numbers are above the average for similar schools. There is a growing number of pupils from ethnic minorities who are enriching the school community.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Satisfactory 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

Bishop Parker is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. The head teacher together with the governors, other members of the leadership team, the Religious Education (RE) manager and the chaplaincy and Rainbows teams are very effective in promoting the Catholic dimension of the school. Prayer is an integral part of school's daily life and is central to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. Pupils behave very well, work hard and thrive within a strong Christian community where they feel loved, well supported and safe. Overall, teaching is good but ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. Where work is matched to their individual needs, pupils make good progress.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 2

Since the last inspection, the school has put in place a system for monitoring RE and reviewing lesson planning and assessment of pupils' work; to date, no evaluation of these initiatives to raise pupils' progress has been undertaken.

The inspectors agree with most of the school's summative grading in the RE SEF. However, the self-evaluation within the document lacks clarity and rigour in some of the sections. The school has highlighted two priorities for future development: the first recognises that teachers require further support in order to challenge more able pupils in RE; the second identifies the need to establish a monitoring and evaluation system for "Come and See" so that pupils' progress is used to inform planning.

The governors and senior leadership team (SLT) are committed to improving the school. Its Catholic dimension is strengthened through the very good chaplaincy team and the effective Rainbows team. The head teacher, ably supported by two key stage managers and a SENA, ensures the Catholic mission of the school is a priority.

The current leadership, together with the governors, have the capacity to ensure good effectiveness is maintained.

What the school should do to improve further

- interrogate RE data and use the information to monitor pupils' progress and ensure appropriately challenging work is provided for all pupils
- review initiatives and evaluate the impact on pupil progress
- develop marking procedures to give pupils clear targets for improving their work and allow them time to respond to comments.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 2

Pupils love their school and are eager to participate in all aspects of school life. They are friendly and caring, ready to help others; they, in turn, feel valued, safe and well supported.

Pupils can talk about the main events in the Church's year, know and understand the mission statement and talk confidently about the work of the school council.

The prayer life of the school permeates its very being and is central to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. They know formal prayers appropriate for their age group and are relaxed in informal and spontaneous prayer situations. In the Rejoice celebration and the meditations observed, pupils were attentive, responsive and reflective. All classrooms have a prayer table and RE display board and pupils are given the opportunity for personal reflection and prayer. In Year 3 all pupils participate in the preparation for the sacraments of reconciliation and first Eucharist.

The chaplaincy team includes two priests, the head teacher, the RE manager and the chaplain. Pupils respond very well to the activities organised by the chaplaincy team and really benefit from the wide range of experiences which enrich the life and work of the school. They particularly enjoy liturgical celebrations, the year group reflection days and special days in thanksgiving of God's wonderful world. Pupils' joyful singing, together with recorder players and a drummer, adds to the celebrations. Teaching assistants (TAs) have been trained as Rainbows facilitators and another TA now co-ordinates the programme which is very much appreciated by pupils and parents.

Pupils behave very well and they are interested in their RE lessons; they co-operate and work well in pairs. Pupils have a good attitude to learning but this is not always reflected in their written work. Overall, they progress well to achieve national expectations at the end of KS1 and KS2 but there is some underachievement when tasks do not provide challenge or staff expectations are not sufficiently high.

Leaders and managers

Grade 2

The head teacher has a clear vision for the school which is shared and owned by all members of the school community. All members of staff clearly promote the Catholic life of the school and are good role models for the pupils. The Catholic mission of the school is explicit and evidenced in its daily life. There is a range of RE related displays around the school which are linked to topic themes, the liturgical year and sacramental preparation. RE is regarded as a core subject with generous allocations of money and INSET time.

The RE manager is very enthusiastic and is a good role model for colleagues; both the meditation she led at lunchtime and within her lesson were spiritually uplifting. By covering PPA in each year she has a good understanding of the pupils across the school and they respond well to her activities. She works hard to support colleagues and monitors their planning and assessments. As yet, the information obtained from assessments throughout the school is not used to improve pupils' progress.

The governors are aware of their responsibilities and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are invited to comment on the RE SEF and the school development plan once the documents have been drafted. The RE manager and the chaplain provide annual reports for the governing body (GB). The RE and worship link governor visits the school regularly. Committees undertake much of the work of the GB and a sub-committee has recently been established to review the drop in Catholic applicants and the implications for future sacramental preparation within curriculum time.

The school is highly regarded by its parent body. One parent wrote, "The school has a family atmosphere, reflected by its strong Catholic ethos." Another, "We were keen to find a school that focuses on the entire child not only or too strongly on academic attainment, SATs and OfSTED results". Similarly, pupils enjoy the family atmosphere; they have a common sense of belonging. The successful renewal of the Investors in People award confirms the ethos that underpins the community: everyone is important, everyone belongs. The school's

involvement in charity work is well established and very good. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the events they organised to raise money to buy pigs, supply water and grow vegetables, besides donating stationery items, a sports kit and exchanging footballs. In thanks, the Sepo women made an Olympic themed rug from re-cycled grain sacks for the school. The strong links developed with Zambia and Kenya provide the pupils with a real understanding of their needy brothers and sisters in the world. Within the local community, Year 6 described visits to the school by Sikhs and Muslims and clearly enjoyed learning about other faiths.

Provision

Grade 2

Collective worship is well planned and there is a variety of formal and informal opportunities for daily prayer. Masses are celebrated in school and the KS2 pupils go to the parish church on some holy days of obligation. Parishioners enjoy the pupils' enthusiastic singing and comment on their good behaviour. The chaplaincy and Rainbows teams are very effective and enhance the Catholic life of the school, supporting and nurturing both pupils and staff.

Overall, teaching is good but varies from satisfactory to outstanding. Where work is matched to their individual needs, pupils make good progress. Lessons are usually well planned and enjoyed by pupils. RE books have the mission statement and the school's aspirations in the front. The book scrutiny undertaken as part of the inspection showed a lack of differentiation, inconsistency in marking and prompts to help pupils improve their work; the levels of attainment awarded at the end of the year were not a reflection of the work in some books. TAs are well deployed and provide good support, particularly for EAL and SEN pupils.

The school devotes 10% of teaching time to RE and most year groups use "Here I Am", the RE programme. The lower years follow the new "Come and See", scheme of work which the school trialled and which it will be introducing throughout the school in September. By working closely with the parish, the school has links with the SVP, Knights of St Columba and also uses the talents of other parishioners for music and floristry help in making their class advent wreaths. The curriculum is also enriched through the school's work with CAFOD, Zambia and Kenya.

The school is assessing work according to current diocesan guidance and ensures end of year levels of attainment are recorded but this data is not collated or interrogated. In some year groups pupils are given clear targets so they are aware of the steps they need to take in order to progress. Pupils' books do not always reflect the enthusiasm with which they respond verbally as written tasks are not differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils. Home learning journals include RE activities and the recently revised end of year reports gives priority to RE, and some reports also include a RE target.

The inspectors would like to thank all members of the school community for the warm welcome and hospitality extended during their visit.