



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## INSPECTION REPORT

### ST BRIGID'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

---

Inspection dates	9 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup> December 2013
Reporting Inspectors	Brenda Beale
Shadow Inspector	Christine Finnegan

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	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Rev Jan Nowotnik
School address	Frankley Beeches Road Northfield Birmingham B31 5AB
Telephone number	0121 464 2364
E-mail address	head@stbrigid.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	November 2008
DFE School number	330 3330
Unique Reference Number	103432

<b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Mrs R Nash</b>
--------------------	-------------------

---

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



## Evidence

The inspection was carried out by 2 Diocesan Inspectors. 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 inspectors observed 6 full and 3 partial RE lessons, 4 of them with the headteacher. In addition the inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. They held meetings with the chair of governors, staff, and parish priest. They observed 2 prayer services, a Key Stage 2 assembly and Mass, 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. They looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about teaching and learning, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

## Information about the school

St Brigid's is a larger than average Catholic primary school serving the parish of Our Lady and St Brigid in Northfield. St Brigid's is in a mixed area of council and private housing area with a high proportion of children experiencing social deprivation. The number of Catholic pupils is currently 67%. The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is well above the national average. The number of pupils receiving pupil premium is broadly in line with the national average, as are the numbers with special needs and/or disabilities supported by at school action. The proportion with a statement of educational needs or supported at school action plus is above average. There have been some recent changes in staffing. The school is currently in the process of converting to a multi-academy company with five other Catholic primary schools and a Catholic secondary school.

## Main Finding

In its self-evaluation St Brigid's judges itself to be good with outstanding features. Whilst this overall judgement is reliable there are some discrepancies within the judgements it has made about various aspects of the school's Catholic life and RE. It judges collective worship, teaching and learning, and curriculum to be good. Outcomes for the pupils from the Catholic life of the school and curriculum opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral and development are judged to be outstanding. These judgements are to some extent reliable. They were largely based on monitoring and evaluation that took place prior to considerable staff changes including the appointment of a new RE leader. At times school evaluation has been cautious: evidence of collective worship suggests that it is outstanding rather than good. The judgement that teaching and learning are good or better does not take account of some inconsistencies in quality in part because of recent staff changes. There is, however, good and better teaching in the school. Development plans for RE and Catholic life are in place but do not contain actions that are sufficiently specific or measurable.

## School self-evaluation

The processes used to monitor and evaluate how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning are not currently rigorous or frequent enough to make an accurate judgement about pupil attainment across the school. At the end of both key stages there is evidence of above average attainment. There is evidence of some good or better progress at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 and also pupils in Foundation Stage make good progress. But this is not currently consistent across the school because monitoring and evaluation, book trawls,

lesson observations and analysis of assessment is not frequent or thorough enough. The newly appointed RE leader knows the areas she needs to develop and is fully supported by governors, headteacher and the senior leadership team. She has already sought guidance and advice from the Diocesan Education Service and observed best practice in an outstanding Catholic primary school.

Pupils' participation and response to Catholic life in the school are carefully monitored and evaluated leading to the wholly reliable judgement that it is outstanding. This is an area of frequent review and a subject addressed regularly in senior leadership, staff and governor meetings and frequently in discussions between headteacher and chair of governors. Monitoring includes feedback from parents and visitors, parental and pupil surveys and learning walks. There is a well-developed system of rewards and sanctions which are carefully monitored leading to outstanding behaviour. Weekly meetings take place between 'star pupils' and the headteacher: '*Natter and Nibbles with Nash*' and individual pupil records inform staff how the children feel they are progressing in RE and their spiritual life and any worries or difficulties they may have. Careful monitoring of behaviour also includes pupils' capacity to give and receive forgiveness. Records are kept to ensure pupils have opportunities for fundraising for charities and that they are given good quality experiences of Catholic life. Practices are reviewed and changed according to pupil response.

The school judges pupils' response to collective worship to be good, but experience in the inspection would indicate that it is outstanding. They have been cautious in their judgement despite extensive monitoring and the high priority placed on this aspect of school life. Written observations of child prepared and led liturgies report them to good or outstanding. Regular review is carried out by headteacher, senior leadership and parish priest as to how pupils respond to the excellent provision of collective worship. They are always seeking ways to improve both provision and response.

Monitoring of the school's Catholic life by governors, leadership and staff is rightly judged to be good or better. They have an excellent understanding of outstanding practice in the Catholic life of a school. Governors monitor and evaluate through frequent visits to the school, learning walks and through the headteacher's reports. They hold the headteacher and senior leaders to account. The chair of governors/parish priest has exceptional experience, knowledge and understanding of what outstanding Catholic life in a school should be. He provides both support and challenge for the headteacher, senior leadership team and staff. The RE leader carries out thorough audits of the spiritual environment of the school ensuring the best possible displays, prayer focusses and artefacts. Very positive parent and pupil surveys and questionnaires feed into the monitoring system. Senior leaders walk the school regularly observing behaviour and environment. Governors, senior leaders and staff have a strong commitment to developing the Catholic life of the school, but this priority needs to translate into more specific and, where appropriate, measurable actions in the school development plan.

Leaders' monitoring and evaluation of RE require some development. Their judgements about the quality of teaching and learning in RE, marking and assessment are not based on wholly up to date monitoring evidence. Even fairly recent monitoring has been affected by present changes of staff. However, governors, senior leaders and the newly appointed RE leader acknowledge the need for more rigorous and frequent monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to ensure consistency across the school. RE development plans need to be more focussed around teaching and learning with specific and measurable actions.

The judgement made by the school on the quality of teaching is not based on current staffing. Senior leaders and the RE leader acknowledge that a recent high turnover of staff

has led to a decline in teaching of RE in some classes but they are able to identify where good and outstanding practice does take place and acknowledge that this needs to be disseminated across all classes. Lesson observations show that teachers' subject knowledge is generally strong and continues to improve as a result of whole school and individual support. Self-evaluation judges assessment to be good. However whilst there is evidence of good practice, this is not consistent. Best practice includes teacher questioning, oral feedback and in some year groups there is evidence of good marking that includes 'steps for improvement' and poses questions to extend learning. This is common practice in literacy books. The school bases its judgement about assessment in part on book trawls but these need to be more frequent and carried out with greater rigour and expectation. Assessment does follow diocesan guidelines but needs to be developed to include greater opportunities for less experienced staff to share moderation with best practitioners.

Self-evaluation considers that curriculum is good and, combined and enriched by the Catholic, worship and liturgical life of the school, provides outstanding opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development. The school is wholly accurate in these judgements. The curriculum and planning are scrutinised by the current leader to ensure coverage and quantity. Review of sacramental preparation by senior leaders, RE leaders and parish catechists steered by the parish priest has led to a different approach. It is now much more inclusive of the parents and is being carefully monitored to assess impact. The pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development is accurately judged to be outstanding because governors, senior leaders, the RE leader and all members of staff place this as their most important priority and have the highest expectations in this area of everyone in their community. It is under constant review.

The provision of collective worship is judged in self-evaluation to be good but all the evidence points to it being outstanding. Almost all parents have told the school that they are happy with the opportunities for pupils to pray and are satisfied with the opportunities for the celebration of weekly Mass and assemblies. Quality is rigorously monitored by senior leadership and parish priest.

### **Overall effectiveness of the school<sup>1</sup>**

Children enter Reception Class with varied levels of knowledge of their faith due to half of the present Reception children coming from other nursery settings. This is shown in the baseline conducted over the first half term whereby children who attended the Nursery come into Reception knowing their basic Catholic prayers and signs while those that had not are less familiar. Re-assessment in the summer term shows a wealth of knowledge gained during their first year in school. At the end of both key stages there is evidence of above average attainment in both learning about and learning from religion as well as good or better progress. A pupil questionnaire shows that pupils enjoy their RE lessons and appreciate the value of the Faith in their lives

Pupils have a very strong recognition of the role model Christ provides. Year 6 pupils are prefects who are examples of how to behave and are role models for the younger children in the school. Also pupils in Year 6 are allocated a Reception child to look after over the course of the year and to demonstrate Christ's virtues through their words and actions. The way pupils engage in conflict resolution and their willingness to help each other, to forgive and be kind is outstanding. Pupils are trained as peer buddies and playground pals to reinforce the principles of forgiveness and kindness daily in the playground. Additionally, the children know that they will be forgiven for their mistakes if they are truly sorry, in the

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.

way that Jesus taught. Pupils and their families are very willing to support those less fortunate than themselves. The children often initiate fundraising projects themselves and have supported local, national and global causes including Romania, the Gambia the Philippines crisis. Feedback from the children who receive the weekly Wednesday Word and The Catholic Times indicates they enjoy reading them and the getting involved in the activities in them. Many families tell the school that they have been overwhelmed by the support of the school community during times of difficulty or distress. Many children and parents attend the Zacchaeus counselling sessions each week. There is a designated family support worker who helps families within the parish and staff are available to parents at the end of each day.

Parents, parishioners, visitors and the parish priest have commented positively on the children's high level of commitment to their faith. This is evidenced by their attendance at sacramental preparation meetings and optional Rosary sessions in May and October. The children eagerly take responsibility for helping with the organisation of Masses and assemblies. By the time they are in Year 6 they have a good knowledge of the structure of the Mass and can select bidding prayers. The children participate in Masses and other acts of collective worship with enthusiasm and reverence. The children eagerly take responsibility for helping with the organisation of Masses and assemblies. By the time they are in Year 6 they have a good knowledge of the structure of the Mass and can select bidding prayers. Respect, reverence and behaviour are of a very high standard for all acts of collective worship. The pupils understand that Masses and assemblies are special, holy times and behave with the utmost respect. The children understand the importance of prayer and the school provides many opportunities for different types of prayer throughout the week. Children are beginning to write thoughtful bidding prayers for Masses and offer their own individual prayers for themselves and others in prayer services and gatherings in class. They also sing enthusiastically and understand that singing is a form of prayer and praise.

There is good and outstanding teaching in RE in both key stages, with some that requires improvement to be good. Resources are good and teaching is at its best when ICT is used effectively by both pupils and staff and when good questioning is used, particularly to develop understanding and meaning. In classes where teaching is at its best there is 'a buzz of learning' – pupils are fully engaged, independent, enthusiastic and excited about their learning. Best practice shows teachers know when to intervene and correct misconceptions. Where teachers are using assessment effectively marking and feedback is good and teachers explain to children the important next steps in their learning. The children respond positively to this and endeavour to act on the advice given. The school is aware that it needs to develop and strengthen their assessment procedures to match the effective of those used in other core subjects.

By following the diocesan scheme 'Learning and Growing as the People of God' there is good continuity and progression in learning and it has helped to eradicate overlap or repetition. The curriculum is enriched through sacramental preparation and the liturgical and worship life of the school. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of prayer and liturgical seasons is good. The school provides family life and sex education in line with the teachings of the Church.

The provision of collective worship is outstanding because of the range and quality of expertise within the school and the support provided by the whole school community and the parish priest and his parishioners. There are extremely strong links between school and parish both working together to support children and their families.

## Recommendations

- Ensure consistency of high quality teaching and learning by sharing best practice, team teaching and developing monitoring and evaluation processes making sure they are more frequent and rigorous.
- Improve the quality of marking and feedback to ensure pupils know how to achieve well and take the next steps in their learning in RE.
- To accommodate the size and demands of the school, develop a team to manage, lead develop, monitor and evaluate the Catholic life, collective worship and RE in the school.
- Ensure that development planning for Catholic life and RE identifies improvements that are specific and, where appropriate, measurable.



Diocesan Education Service,  
Don Bosco House,  
Coventry Road,  
Coleshill,  
B46 3EA

December 2013

Dear Parents and Carers

**Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Brigid's Catholic Primary School,  
9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> December 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.

The school judged itself to be good in its Catholic life and RE with some outstanding features. The inspection found that this overall judgement is reliable because your children flourish in this school where Catholic life and collective worship is outstanding. At the end of key stages pupils' attainment is above average and they have made good progress. The provision for their spiritual, moral and vocational development is exceptional. There is evidence of good or better teaching. The leadership team is very aware of those teachers who need improvement in teaching RE and will provide the necessary support for their development.

Pupils' behaviour and care for each other is excellent. Children respond exceptionally well to the collective worship which they help to provide. Catholic life is very effectively led by the governors, headteacher, senior leadership team and parish priest. The newly appointed subject leader is fully committed to her role and to improving standards in RE. Children do very well because they behave well and when teaching is at its best thoroughly enjoy their learning in RE and make very good progress.

To improve further we have suggested that the school should develop more rigorous systems to monitor teaching and learning in RE and provide a range of support to ensure all teaching is good or better. Teachers need to improve the quality of their marking in RE to help your children to know and achieve the next steps in learning.

Throughout the inspection your children were so very courteous, welcoming, extremely well behaved. They love the Catholic life and collective worship and are very proud of their school. We thank you for the part you play, whatever your own faith maybe, in supporting the Catholic life of the school and your child's spiritual growth.

Yours sincerely

Brenda Beale  
Diocesan Inspector