



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and Inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
of the Education Act 2005

URN 118780

**St Benedict's Catholic Primary School
Lambourn Way
Chatham
ME5 8PU**

Inspection date: 10th November 2015

Chair of Governors:	Mr K Magee
Headteacher:	Mrs B Salamonczyk
Inspectors:	Mrs A Oddy
	Ms J Mann

EDUCATION COMMISSION

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR
Tel 01689 829331 Fax 01689 829255

SECTION 48

Description of the school

The school is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Chatham Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Medway Local Authority. The principal parish which the school serves is St Simon Stock, Walderslade. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 54%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and 10% in Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 211. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly around average. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is below average. Around 10% of pupils are disabled or have special educational needs; this is in line with the national average. The majority of pupils are from a White British heritage. The rest of the pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is below average.

Date of previous inspection:

11th November 2010

Overall Grade:

2

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1 Outstanding
Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Requires improvement
Grade 4 Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school in providing Catholic Education

**GRADE
1**

St Benedict's is an outstanding Catholic school. It is a shining example of a Catholic community where everyone is welcomed, valued and encouraged. Pupils enjoy school and achieve well. They recognise the care and support the school provides and the many opportunities it offers them. They are enthusiastic participants in all aspects of school life. They are proud of their school and eloquently describe how much they enjoy being part of this school family. They are extremely courteous, well behaved and welcoming.

The Headteacher's vision and faith commitment support and encourage the cohesive staff team in delivering high quality Religious Education and a vibrant Catholic life.

Governors are clear regarding their role and vision for the school, considering it essential that all the school does is centred around Christ and His teachings. They ably fulfil their role of support and challenge and are fully involved in all aspects of school life. Their enthusiasm and commitment are evident and contribute significantly to the successful management of the school.

The school provides an attractive, and well resourced learning environment which proclaims its Catholic identity in a wealth of beautiful displays linked to Religious Education and the school's Catholic life.

Parents are very appreciative of the school and of its strong Catholic ethos. A parent commented, "Faith permeates the entire life of the school and is prioritised, so children are encouraged to develop spiritually and morally, as well academically."

Recommendations made by the last inspection have been fully addressed.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- Continue to build on the current good practice in developing the role of pupils in promoting and developing the Catholic life of the school.
- Continue to develop the use of meditation to enhance pupils' spiritual development.

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

The mission statement informs all policies and practice. It is regularly reviewed by the school community. It is simplified for pupils as a shorter statement which is known by pupils across the school. Pupils understand its meaning and are aware of its importance in school life and in their daily lives. They are able to relate it to their learning and the teachings of Jesus. They respond very positively to the school's strong, caring Catholic ethos and are pleased to play active roles in the Catholic life of the school. These include responsibilities for prayer and worship; for example, Junior Sacristans help to prepare for school Masses and liturgies. Other examples of pupils taking responsibilities are the Lunch Time Crew and Junior Road Safety Officers. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously. They are happy to serve others and their school.

The school works closely with parents and the parish to develop the spiritual life of the pupils. Parents are welcomed into the school. They receive a prayer book and rosary when their children start school and are invited to join their children for morning prayer each day; 'Begin the day in a special way.'

The school is a Mass centre for the parish and classes from the school lead the readings and prayers on a regular basis. The recent introduction of 'Messy Church' activity sessions for preschool children encourages children to participate in the school's Catholic life from their earliest years. Pupils from the school participate in Diocesan events. One such example of involvement includes liturgical dance at the Good Shepherd Liturgy at Aylesford.

Pupils have established links with other schools, both in the Diocese and internationally. They are active in fundraising for a range of charities, recognising the importance of caring for others. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are kind and considerate to each other. They appreciate the importance of praise, but also the importance of tolerance and forgiveness. They express their views and beliefs with confidence and also show respect for the beliefs and practices of others. Respect for other faiths is fostered by teaching in Religious Education and visits to other places of worship. Pupils are proud of their school and describe it as a happy and friendly community.

The Fantastic Ideas Group (FIG) is a recent initiative for pupils to promote the understanding and enjoyment of the school's Catholic life and ethos to their peers and

illustrates the school's commitment to empowering pupils in this respect. It is a recommendation of this inspection that the school continues to develop this good practice in involving pupils in developing the Catholic life of the school.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

Pupils achieve high standards in Religious Education and make excellent progress. Pupil progress is regularly assessed and tracked throughout the school, ensuring that pupils achieve their full potential. Baseline assessment in Early Years enables the school to accurately judge progress and identify pupils requiring support. By the end of Key Stage 2 a significant number of pupils attain the higher levels. Pupils with special needs are sensitively supported to ensure their needs are met. Higher attaining pupils are appropriately challenged. All groups of pupils achieve well. In the lessons observed, pupils were attentive and reflective. They were encouraged to explore the issues and concepts involved and responded thoughtfully and with insight. Pupils responded well to skilful questioning and demonstrated significant religious literacy. They clearly enjoyed their lessons and wanted to do well. A variety of teaching strategies, including the use of cross-curricular links and opportunities for independent research, successfully engage and enthuse pupils.

ICT is used very reflectively to support pupils' learning. During this inspection, a group of pupils were observed making a short video clip of the Visitation. Pupils were enjoying the drama aspect of this activity and absorbed in conveying the emotions involved. The pupils were looking forward to seeing the completed film being posted on the school website.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

Pupils' response to the school's prayer and worship is outstanding. They recognise that prayer and worship are central to the life of the school and are enthusiastic participants. They are offered a wealth of opportunities for prayer and worship, including those based on the feasts and seasons of the Church. Pupils are reverent and respectful during collective worship. They understand that worship can take many forms and enjoy participating in singing, drama and liturgical dance. Whole school Masses and liturgies are occasions for celebration and families are invited to join in these. Parents and pupils spoke appreciatively of these occasions.

Pupils are active participants in the school's prayer and worship. Pupils lead class prayers, assist with the planning and preparation for liturgies and are confident in

making suggestions, knowing that they will be listened to. A recent school Day of Prayer was held following a suggestion by a pupil. The enthusiasm of the recently formed Gospel Choir illustrated the willingness of pupils to contribute their talents to collective worship within the school. Pupils are encouraged to think of the global family of the Church and the diversity within their school community. In 2015 the school introduced the Polish Blessing of Food service, an enriching addition to their Lent and Easter celebrations.

In the act of collective worship observed the pupils were fully involved. They sang joyfully and were attentive and responsive. Readings, pupils' prayers and liturgical dance contributed to the sense of pupil ownership of the celebration. It was well attended by parents and governors and was an excellent example of the school as a worshipping community. Morning prayer held in the playground before school and class-based morning worship were also observed. Both were prayerful occasions clearly valued by all participants.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leaders, governors and managers are deeply committed to the school as a Catholic community and to the Church's mission in education. They are active in their aim to nurture the academic, spiritual and moral development of every pupil and ensure that school development planning reflects this. The Headteacher provides inspirational and supportive leadership to the staff team, encouraging them to develop their skills which contribute to enhancing the school's Catholic life. This includes a comprehensive programme of staff development, including Diocesan training for NQTs, staff inset on meditation, training for leaders of Pupil Chaplaincy and induction for all new staff. Governors are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's Catholic life as part of school improvement planning.

The link governor for Religious Education is also the parish catechist for the First Holy Communion programme, providing valuable continuity between school and parish. Parent and pupil questionnaire responses have contributed to the school's development of its Catholic life, illustrating the school's inclusive attitude to self-evaluation. Parents clearly value the school's Catholic life and ethos. A parent wrote, "I chose this school because of its Catholic ethos. I have not been let down."

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils

The Headteacher is also the Religious Education Coordinator and is very ably supported by members of the Senior Leadership Team. They have an extremely effective programme of monitoring and evaluating the provision for Religious Education and are committed to high standards and achieving the best possible outcomes for all pupils. The school recognises the importance of working with other schools to share and improve good practice and is part of the deanery network of local Catholic schools. This has facilitated external moderation of levelled pupils' work, validating the school's judgements. Level 5 work examples have also been shared with Teachers' Enterprise in Religious Education in order to support other schools' assessment judgements, reflecting St Benedict's commitment to sharing good practice.

Governors are well informed and receive regular reports. They are involved in lesson observations, work scrutinies and curriculum review. The results of these are discussed at Governing Body meetings as part of the governors' role of support and challenge. School self-evaluation is well established and reflects comprehensive systems of assessment and monitoring that inform school development planning.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

Standards of teaching and learning are excellent. Five lessons were observed as part of this inspection, including one which was part of the school's Forest School Programme. All lessons were highly effective in engaging and enthusing pupils and resulted in high quality outcomes.

Lessons used prior learning to good effect. Teachers showed excellent subject knowledge as well as passion and commitment. Technology and resources were used very effectively to enhance the lesson experience and enrich learning. Other adults in the classroom supported pupils and enabled them to extend their learning.

A variety of teaching strategies included the use of discussion partners, in depth questioning and a variety of group and independent work. Appropriate differentiation nurtured and challenged pupils according to their needs. All lessons included a strong element of spirituality, of which prayer was an important part. For example, an Early Years lesson finished with a Circle of Blessing, which was a prayer time to celebrate their work. Older pupils were challenged to explore the concept of justice and responded with interest and empathy.

Reflection is used to enhance the teaching of Religious Education. The school should continue to develop this aspect of pupil spirituality, building on current good practice.

Pupils' written work is of an excellent standard, both in presentation and content. Marking reflects a dialogue between teacher and pupil. Peer and self-assessment is well established. Clear target setting and high expectations contribute to the effectiveness of these strategies. Pupils readily discuss their work with their peers, sharing their learning.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning

The Religious Education curriculum is in line with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and is appropriately tailored to pupils' needs. The school uses 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' programme of Religious Education. Creative links with other areas of the curriculum enrich the Religious Education curriculum and enhance pupils' experience. For example, work in the Forest School increases pupils' awareness of the beauty and wonder of God's world and their place within it. The Religious Education curriculum is also effectively linked with collective worship and the Catholic life of the school.

Staff deliver the curriculum with confidence and enthusiasm, skilfully adapting the

lessons to the needs of the learners. Pupils are enthusiastic and highly motivated learners and receive many opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral and cultural values. They are taught to respect the beliefs and practices of others as part of their study of other faiths and to reflect the school's emphasis that God cares for everyone.

Parents are involved in their children's Religious Education. The Wednesday Word and the CathCom newspaper encourages family discussion of religious topics. A parent wrote, "My child is always talking about faith stories he learns in class."

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

The quality of provision for collective worship is outstanding. St Benedict's is a very inclusive community, uniting all its members in prayer and worship and offering a wealth of opportunities to develop spiritually.

School self-evaluation states that "All those who join us know that they are joining a praying community." Evidence includes the 'Welcome to the Praying Community of St Benedict's Catholic Primary School' booklet and the rich programme of collective worship in the school calendar.

Pupils know that prayer is at the heart of their relationship with God. They are familiar with the traditional prayers of the Church and at ease with spontaneous prayer and writing their own prayers. Beautiful prayer focus areas are a feature of every classroom and offer opportunities for reflection.

A variety of liturgical celebrations and prayer opportunities enables parents and the parish community to join pupils in worship and prayer. This is welcomed and appreciated by all parties.

Lenten Meditations, a day of prayer and a pilgrimage to the parish church further enhance the quality of worship opportunities offered. Pupils also reflect on the blessings the school day brings and record this in a Book of Blessings.

