



Monitoring Report

St Bernadette Catholic Primary School
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DfE Number: 109254

Headteacher: Mrs B. Lee
Chair of Governors: Mrs N. Thomas

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Date of Monitoring Visit: July 9th 2013
Reporting Inspector: Mrs Ann Fowler

Description of School

St Bernadette Catholic Primary School serves primarily the two parishes of St Bernadette and St Gerard Majella. The school site is adjacent to the parish church. The school is slightly smaller than the average primary school. A high percentage, of pupils, are baptised Catholics. The school has a growing number of pupils from a number of diverse ethnic groups including Indian, Afro-Caribbean, Chinese and European families and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

This is a highly effective Catholic school because:

- Leadership at all levels is committed to developing the Catholic Life of the school
- There is a clear shared vision and the head teacher and RE coordinator model effectively the values and teaching they wish the pupils to experience
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate
- Pupils are offered opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school
- Provision for prayer and for the pupils to lead prayer is well developed and effectively reviewed.
- The school is committed to partnership with other Catholic schools and with the diocese.
- Pupils within the school make good progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Relate outcomes in RE lessons to the attainment levels to more effectively develop written work
- Continue to develop strategies for peer and self-assessment in RE
- Continue to develop the work in enabling pupils to lead prayer and worship

How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?

Pupils clearly understand what it means to be part of a Catholic community. They are able to articulate the distinctive nature of a catholic school and relate this to the way people behave. Displays around the school and in the classroom help focus pupils help them make links between aspects of faith and their own lives. The recent art work project conducted with all pupils, has helped them understand and express scripture in a way which is meaningful to them. Each class is named after a saint. All pupils know at least something about the life of their chosen saint and some pupils are able to make connections between the life of the saint and the values and virtues they should demonstrate in their own lives. They could for example explain why they thought the present Pope had taken the name Francis and what sign it might give about what was

important to him. They are proud of their school and keen to accept the opportunities offered to them to take responsibility. Their views are sought on a regular basis. The impact of this is that they are confident in themselves, learn to work collaboratively and have good communication skills. Through the school council, the prefect system, their charity work and other groups, pupils have the opportunity to respond to, take responsibility for and shape the activities of the school.

Prayer is a central and integral part of school life. Pupils are encouraged to lead prayer and worship. A year 2 reflection observed for example was entirely led by pupils who were well prepared and confident in sharing their own prayers, laying out a focal area and encouraging their parents to pray with them. All the pupils know and understand, in a way appropriate to their age and ability, the traditional prayers of the church as well as being able to express their own thoughts in prayer. Parents are encouraged to become involved in the prayer life of the school and younger pupils take home a prayer bag which encourages families to pray together and to write their own prayers. Pupils are also encouraged to explore prayer and scripture through dance. This medium is an effective way for some pupils of mediating the experience of prayer in a way which creates a greater understanding than using words alone. Through prayer and through the taught curriculum pupils are acquiring an understanding of the Church's Year. They are able to discuss the symbols and practices appropriate to each season of the Church's Year. Images and references to prayer around the school reinforce their understanding and prayer contributes to the spiritual and moral development of pupils.

Pupils enjoy Religious Education and are proud of their work. They feel their views are listened to and are confident in sharing their views as a group or in pairs. The lessons develop their understanding of the Catholic Church and other faiths though their oral response is at a greater depth than their written responses. Because teachers aim to make the lessons creative and use stimulating material pupils are engaged in the work and want to succeed and know more. Pupils have a good understanding of Bible stories and are aware of the meaning of parables and able to connect them to their own lives

How effective are leaders and governors in developing the Catholic Life of the school?

The Headteacher provides outstanding leadership in all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. There is clearly a shared vision for the school and the development of the school's distinctively Catholic identity is a priority for both the senior leadership and the governors. The need to foster Spiritual and moral development underpin much of the schools work. The Catholic life of the school and the development of Religious Education is closely monitored and evaluated through both formal and informal systems, including learning walks, pupil and parent questionnaires, scrutiny of pupils' books, lesson observations and interviews. This review mechanism has resulted in the decision of governors to change the RE syllabus to one they believe will be more effective in promoting pupils' understanding. Leadership at all levels has a clear grasp of the schools strengths and areas for development. Governors understand the school, are visible to the community and committed to its success. They receive information about the school in a variety of ways and there is a link governor for RE in place. Governors whilst supportive are able to act as a critical friend. There is an inset programme in place for both staff and governors to develop their understanding of the

distinctiveness of a Catholic school and all staff feel that they are well supported and able to ask questions when necessary. The school has links with other Catholic schools within the area partnership group; this includes sharing good practice and running joint curriculum days. This area is being strengthened with RE coordinators working together to support each other in developing and sharing good practice. Parish links are well developed.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Prayer is at the heart of the life of the school and permeates all aspects of its day at every level. Prayer is well-planned and well-resourced making use of music, art and ICT as well as the traditional practices and prayers of the church. Pupils are increasingly encouraged to be involved in the planning and decision-making which in turn increases their understanding. This area is one which should continue to be developed. Throughout the year there are opportunities for pupils to take part in a variety of different services both formal and informal including mass, reconciliation, reflections, carol services etc. Around the school there are displays of excellent resources which focus pupils' attention on the meaning of prayer.

Through the RE curriculum pupils are encouraged to think about faith, make connections and articulate their own views. Their knowledge of scripture is good and this connects to their understanding of how they should live their lives. However the current syllabus is contributing to limiting the ability of pupils to engage in high level written tasks so the decision to move to a new syllabus should improve provision in this area. Lessons are well planned with a view to engaging pupils and make good use of ICT to engage pupils. Resources, including additional adults are well used and support differentiation enabling all pupils to access the curriculum. Pupils are given opportunities to work in pairs and groups and respond positively to these experiences. Within the lessons there are opportunities to reflect. Some lessons are using outcomes referenced by the attainment levels. Where this takes place it enables work to be pitched at appropriate levels, success criteria to be developed and avoids repetition. Although not all lessons do this at present this is identified as a development area for the school.

The school uses assessment levels to track pupil progress but at present these levels are not as secure as they need to be. With greater use of outcomes related to the attainment levels this will improve. All books are marked and staff use comments to challenge pupils to think more deeply. Pupils respond well to these comments and understand the importance of reflecting on their own work. Within the lessons teachers are beginning to think about methods of self and peer assessment though this is an area requiring greater development.

