



INSPECTION REPORT

St. Bonaventure's Catholic Primary School

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Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 16-17th October 2013
Date of previous inspection: November 2008

Reporting Inspector: Joseph Skivington

Description of School

St. Bonaventure's is a larger than average primary school with 407 pupils on roll, 76% of whom are Catholic. The majority of children are drawn from the parish of St. Bonaventure's as well as the Sacred Heart parish and further afield. Attainment on entry is in line with expectation. Pupils with special educational needs, EAL and FSM make up a smaller than average proportion of the whole school. There is a rich mix and diversity of ethnic minorities. There is a privately run pre school provision on site. The school is currently undergoing new building works which will significantly enhance provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St. Bonaventure's judges itself to be an outstanding school and the evidence produced during the inspection securely bears this evaluation out. It is a fully inclusive, distinctively Catholic community where all are welcome and accepted as individuals regardless of background, made in the image of God, and its ethos is characterised by openness to all, with traditionally close links over many years with the parents, the parish, and the wider community. Pupils participate enthusiastically in and respond impressively to the excellent faith enriching provision for prayer life and liturgy. The adjoining parish church provides opportunities to be involved in parish life, and this demonstrates the sense of the mission of the school being part of the wider mission of the Church. Outcomes from the religious education programme are outstanding, the result of securely good and outstanding teaching. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as the others, because of effective interventions, proactive support in lessons, and tasks clearly suited to their learning needs. The religious education programme makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

Grade 1

The school's capacity to sustain the quality of care and education it provides is outstanding. The leadership has built determinedly on the previous good performance noted at the last inspection and raised it to a higher level. Self evaluation at all levels is being grounded increasingly in accurate analysis and rigorous review. The head teacher and her deputy, who is also the Religious Education leader, inspire the whole school community towards an ambitious vision, planning effectively to ensure that the processes for managing the performance of staff and for their professional development are used well, for example, making particularly fruitful use of diocesan resources and training exercises. This was an area highlighted for development at the last inspection and there has been a sea change in

the school's openness and willingness to seek advice and link with other schools in the diocese to share best practice. Another development point from the previous inspection was to encourage pupils to write at more length and more reflectively on what they are learning. The quality of reflective written work indicates the school has promoted this well, with the result that the ability to make thoughtful connections in daily life with what they are learning has become a real strength. The marking of pupils' work has become an increasingly effective tool to aid progress and improvement, with some excellent practice which is being emulated by all teachers.

What the school should do to improve further

- To use assessment data ever more smartly to inform teaching strategies, through well pitched, challenging lesson objectives.
- To promote further opportunities for all pupils to plan and present their own liturgies and to expand their contribution to the Catholic life of the school, and the parish.

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

Grade1

Pupils are wholeheartedly involved in the Catholic life of the school and make a positive contribution to it, not least by their excellent behaviour, which contributes to their own learning and the ethos of the school. Their understanding of the school's mission is clear because they can both talk about it easily, and can relate it to their daily lives in and outside of school. They feel their voice is heard through more frequent opportunities to feedback their opinions and ideas, for instance, a recent questionnaire on the quality of their assemblies and how they would improve their presentation and impact. They have taken up the Leaders in Faith award scheme with great enthusiasm, a scheme that provides a practical focus and easily measured objectives, which call for an active commitment to the Catholic ethos of the school from every individual child. A significant role, for example, might be created for pupils to be represented on the school's chaplaincy team so that they could take more ownership in the planning of the liturgical year. They take responsibility for their own lives and the care of the younger children. They absorb easily the shared values lived out in the Catholic ethos of the school and have a sound awareness of spiritual and moral matters which they are able to articulate well. They respond generously to the needs of others beyond the school, and this makes a valuable contribution to the welcoming openness and inclusivity of the school. Many are involved in fundraising for a variety of charities both home and overseas, as well as outreach to the local community and local charities.

Their response to and participation in the prayer life of the school is outstanding. They have growing opportunities to learn the skills of planning and preparing assemblies, in the first instance in their classrooms, moving on to whole school assemblies and the celebration of Mass in school, and in the heart of the parish. By becoming more involved as they go through the school they will gain the experience and confidence to become the involved parishioners of the future. The use of the Prayer Chair in class, for example, is a positive opportunity for individuals or pairs of pupils to prepare a reflection for the whole

group on a theme of their choice. The heartfelt prayers which they compose and regularly pray, are contained in beautifully illuminated books which take pride of place on the class altars. The weekly lunchtime prayer club is popular and well attended, and pupils are already coming up with their own ideas for the new prayer garden when the new school buildings are completed. The children's demeanour and reverence at prayer, even the youngest ones in the Reception class, demonstrate a seriousness and growing faith, as well as a sense of the sacred and the special time for prayer.

All pupils and groups of pupils make expected progress, with many exceeding expectation. Prior attainment on entry is broadly average, but by the end of Key Stage 1 98% are at Level 2, and 41% achieve Level 3. This excellent progress continues so that by the end of Key Stage 2 all pupils are at Level 4, with 47% at Level 5. A particular strength is pupils' learning from religion. They can discuss the topics they cover easily and translate the truths they learn into their own lives. They have a sound grasp of the main tenets of the Faith, for instance, the significance of the Last Supper, or the divinity of Jesus, as well as understanding the message of Jesus through the Gospels. In lessons pupils work hard and enjoy the subject, especially when they are challenged and engaged by effective teaching strategies and precisely targetted lesson and learning objectives, although this is not always consistently the case as yet. In the best lessons pupils can take ownership of their own learning with well planned but minimal intervention by the teacher. In these the more able are stretched and approach their full potential, while the less able thrive because teaching strategies are tailored well to their learning needs.

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

Grade 1

Outstanding leadership and management promote the Catholic life of the school very effectively, with appraisal, and focussed planning for future improvement. The Catholic ethos of the school colours all of its activities and in its thinking and planning the leadership is taking more and more into account the views of parents, diocese, and the wider community to inform their self evaluation. There has developed a culture of evaluation of impact through tighter systems of monitoring and analysis and this needs to be extended to give the pupils themselves a major role in monitoring and evaluating Catholic life. Care is taken to keep alive and in the forefront of the staff, the mission of the school, especially at the start of the academic year. The school has ensured regular diocesan training for all staff on spirituality and Catholic education. Teachers have also benefited from the courses for Catholic teachers, as well as diocesan training for assessment. Prayer life and liturgies are monitored and reviewed very effectively, with close liaison between governors and senior leadership. The head teacher reports to the governing body on the quality of Catholic life, and learning walks by governors have been fruitful. The school development plan objectives are likewise regularly reviewed and re shaped. The effectiveness of leadership and management is seen in the high morale of the staff, the pupil's good care for one another, and the very good relationships between staff and pupils. As an example of promoting the Catholic ethos, the morning prayer on the playground, with all the children, teachers, parents and carers is a powerful example and an evangelising opportunity. Parents are wonderfully supportive, helping their little ones to make the Sign of the Cross.

The governing body is made up of supportive and members who are committed to sustaining the school's ethos and standards, and are able to visit the school and some lessons when they possibly can. The RE coordinator liaises with the link governor and reports formally to the governing body. The governing body is making itself more closely aware and challenging of the work that the school is doing so that it can provide real, critical support. As a consequence of diocesan training and advice. As a result they are also developing their understanding of diocesan guidelines and documents and implementing them in the Catholic life of the school. All statutory and canonical responsibilities are met.

There is a clear policy promoted by governors and senior staff to promote community cohesion with the result that the school has an openness to all, all are included in its life, and its generous outreach to the local and the global community is a real strength. The school collaborates well with other schools and participates in community undertakings, including local charities. The curriculum provides an exploration of other faiths, and good use is made of resources. Those of other denominations or faiths feel that they are able to express their own beliefs comfortably, and all feel included and welcomed into every aspect of school life. Acts of worship leave room for the other person's spiritual identity, their modes of expression and their values. Parents and children from all backgrounds, especially those from other cultures are not just welcomed and supported, but inject a real sense of global awareness and provide rich experiences within the school's diverse community.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 1

Provision for prayer life is outstanding, a real strength of the school, because it meets very effectively the spiritual needs of the pupils, be it through assemblies and liturgies, or the opportunities for reflection such as the prayer club. Pupils devise and present their own prayer time, using the prayer chair and readings, which is an excellent opportunity to reflect together as a class. The school supports the parish- run preparation programme for First Holy Communion. There are many occasions during the day for spiritual nourishment through prayer and moments of reflection. The liturgical year is well marked, planned, and celebrated, particularly Advent, Lent and Holy Week. Increasingly each event is evaluated and reviewed to determine how it could be bettered and made more relevant and engaging. The retreat for the Year 6 pupils at Kintbury was a memorable, spiritual experience.

The curriculum successfully meets the needs of all groups of pupils, as well as meeting the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education requirements, such as the allocation of time. The school follows the God Matters curriculum and is embedding its own schemes of work to meet the needs of its pupils. Relationship education is dealt with sensitively and clearly from a Catholic standpoint. Attendance at the Diocesan training ensured leaders are up to date with SRE developments, integrating SRE objectives within the curriculum. The beliefs of other faiths are explored through topics in the schemes of work. Resources are well managed, and ICT, art and music particularly are used imaginatively to colour and enrich the learning experience. The colourful artwork and displays around the school reinforce the RE topics, for instance the Creation story, or liturgical seasons the pupils are studying, they affirm the creators and educate others, and visibly declare the Catholic ethos of the school. Resources to support teaching, and to enliven and enrich the schemes of work, are

good. The curriculum makes an excellent and invaluable contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils, and is an area that the school is working on to improve even further.

The quality of teaching and purposeful learning is outstanding, with good and outstanding practice observed during the inspection. Outstanding teaching enables the pupils to learn really well because it engages their interest and provides challenge, so that the pupils themselves do the work and make the intellectual effort. Group and paired work were especially effective strategies because they provided peer learning and assessment. On occasion, where teaching has less impact on learning, the lesson objectives are not always precise enough and followed through, to challenge and meet individual learning needs. Proactive teaching assistants provide invaluable support especially in allowing the teacher to split children into smaller groups with differentiated tasks tailored to their learning needs. The scrutiny of written work paints an rapidly improving picture, with marking that is both helpful and consistent, and encourages a dialogue between teacher and pupil. Pupils' work and behaviour in lessons is excellent, keen to do their best for their teachers, as well as genuinely enthusiastic about the subject. Their enjoyment is clearly evident.

Assessment procedures are already embedded and the school is effectively aligning the level indicators closely to the God Matters programme. This can, however, remain essentially an information gathering exercise, but the school recognises what is needed is the implementation of this data to inform teaching and learning objectives. The school is aware that this data must now be translated into the lesson plans and lesson objectives in order to meet the specific learning needs of every pupil. The already effective and fruitful structure of lesson observations will enable the best practice in assessment for learning to be shared rapidly throughout the school.