



St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

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D/ES Number: 109254

Headteacher: Celia Dolan

Chair of Governors: Philip Morgan

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: July 2007

Date of previous inspection: March 2001

Reporting Inspector: Mrs A Barrett

Description of School

St Bernadette's is an average sized primary school serving the parishes of St Bernadette and St Gerard Majella. Links with these parishes are strong and provide invaluable support for the Catholic life of the school. There are 246 pupils on roll, of whom 91% are baptised Catholics. The majority of pupils are White British, with a small proportion of children from minority ethnic groups who are in the early stages of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St Bernadette's is a very effective school with many outstanding features and providing a good Catholic education for its pupils. There is a real sense of purpose, with headteacher, governors, staff and parents working together for the benefit of the pupils. Parents are fully supportive of the school and are very satisfied with the progress and happiness of their children. Teachers have high expectations and work together as a team to provide well for the pupils.

The strong Catholic ethos is well grounded in the school's mission statement which is regularly reviewed. The provision for collective worship is outstanding and this, combined with very positive links with parents and parishes, makes a huge contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. The quality of provision for religious education is good and continues to improve. Standards of achievement in RE are good, and as a result of excellent teaching, pupils make very good progress throughout the school. The monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress is making a positive impact as evident in the rising standards across the school.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

The areas identified as needing improvement at the last inspection have been effectively addressed. The marking and evaluation policy has been updated and processes for assessing pupils' work across the school have been significantly improved. Teachers' assessment of pupils' progress is now systematically monitored by both the headteacher and RE co-ordinator.

In addition there has been a complete review of the RE curriculum and of relationship education and new syllabi recommended by the diocese are in the process of being embedded across the school. Further improvements have been made to resources and a progressive cycle for the teaching of other faiths implemented. Prayer and reflection have also been provided in all classrooms throughout the school and these are well used by both pupils and staff.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The capacity to improve further is high because leadership has a clearly articulated vision and understanding of what needs to be done and has robust systems for implementation. This vision is shared by all and the mission statement, vision and values are revisited at the start of each academic year. Self-evaluation of both RE and the Catholic life of the school is extremely accurate with time set aside in staff meetings for the RE Co-ordinator to lead teachers in reflecting and reviewing what is being done and what needs to be improved. This, combined with a stable staffing who are open to professional development, provides a strong foundation upon which the school can further develop initiatives.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue with the process of fully implementing the new RE schemes of work and developing a whole school approach to the levelling of pupils' work
- Further develop RE/PSHME links to address the needs of all pupils in readiness for the cultural diversity they will experience in the wider world.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are excellent. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher is strongly focused on the school's Catholic mission. Teachers provide excellent role models and this is highly valued and celebrated by parents as being a very strong feature of the school. There is a strong positive ethos within the school which is actively promoted by the Head and staff team. Catholicity is at the heart of this school and is embedded in all areas of school life

Governors are regularly involved in reviewing their mission, vision and values. They are very effective in their role in relation to the school's Catholic foundation and have a good awareness of the strengths and development needs of the school. They, in turn, provide both support and challenge to the headteacher.

The link governor for RE is very effective in her supportive role within the school and is a model of good practice. She is a visible presence regularly taking part in 'learning walks' and pupil interviews.

There are excellent links with both parents and parishes. This is further strengthened because many members of staff and governors are also being parishioners. Links with the local Catholic secondary school, which is adjacent, are also strong.

Parents are effusive in their praise of the school, choosing it because of the high quality of care and education it provides within a faith setting.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

The school is rightly proud of the quality of its worship which is effectively integrated within the context of the liturgical year and which is an integral part of the school's life. Collective worship takes place on a daily basis in a variety of forms and includes class prayer, whole school or key stage worship, class mass or para-liturgy. All worship is well planned with a strong emphasis on involving pupils in the process and taking account of their different ages and development.

Provision actively promotes pupils' spiritual development and moments of reflection are provided throughout the curriculum. Pupils respond well to, and enjoy, school assemblies and worship. They understand the reasons for and benefits of worship. Music and drama are very effectively used to enhance assemblies and worship. The Foundation/Key Stage 1 para-liturgy to celebrate the end of school year and the Key Stage 2 assembly on 'living and learning through Christ' were excellent examples of this. The para-liturgy was very effectively led by the parish priest whose empathetic understanding of this age group resulted in a joyful and moving experience for all. Pupils were fully engaged through reading bible passages and bidding prayers, actively contributing to the 'sharing session' led by the priest and singing with real enthusiasm. The Key Stage 2 assembly was jointly led by the headteacher and Year 5 teacher and made an explicit contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. The school is pro-active in encouraging family and friends to join them for school Mass, which they regularly do.

Prayer areas are positioned throughout the school. These are well maintained, topical and regularly used by pupils. Pupils are helped to pray in different ways and to become confident in reflecting and in contributing their own thoughts. Prayer 'diamonds' and books for pupils to record their prayers are also effectively used.

Links with parishes are strong and the weekly visit from the parish priest is warmly received. In turn, children from the school lead the singing at communion in parish Masses, and the parish and school work collaboratively to plan for school liturgies.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

The vast majority of pupils enter the school with little or no experience of church or worship. However, as a result of excellent teaching they make very good progress by the end of the Foundation Stage and continue to make good progress across the Key Stages. On entry to reception class, an overview of pupils' knowledge and understanding in R.E is gathered. The systems for monitoring standards in RE and pupils' progress in RE are robust.

Attainment is monitored through teachers' regular assessment. Comparisons of RE written work against pupils' written work in literacy show that all levels of learners produce work that is of a comparable standard and shows a similar rate of progress. The quality of work in the pupils' books and their comments in discussion highlight their interest and enthusiasm for the subject which they see as being 'special'. Written work is varied and interesting and includes retellings, reports, and pictures. The school is committed to implementing levelling within RE and is in the process of trialling this with a view to whole school implementation in the next academic year. Younger pupils speak with confidence about Jesus and his family, the importance of Easter and Christmas. Older pupils have a good understanding of key figures in the Old and New Testament. All pupils show a good understanding of the role of the parish priest (as a result of his regular weekly visits to the school) and have a real understanding of the importance of prayer in their life. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of other faiths is good and is supported by a varied programme of visits and events which ensure that pupils respect those who hold beliefs and faiths which are different from their own.

Grade 2

Teaching and Learning in Religious Education

The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding features. Outstanding teaching was characterised by well planned lessons with good pace and a range of teaching styles such as role play, paired and group discussion, use of ICT and hot seating. These techniques were effective in engaging and enthusing pupils. Pupils were regularly being challenged to be inquisitive, to think for themselves and to show respect for the viewpoints of others.

Pupils enjoy the subject and take an active part in class discussions. Behaviour in all lessons was exemplary. The school rightly prides itself on its inclusiveness. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and pupils at the early stages of learning English make good progress in religious education and take a full part in lessons. Teaching assistants are effective in supporting those pupils who need additional help.

The marking of pupils' written work is generally helpful but there are some examples of it not being consistently challenging or not showing pupils how they can improve.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The school provides a well balanced broad and inclusive curriculum which is very effective in meeting the needs of learners. The linguistic needs of EAL children are met through well planned use of support staff and parental involvement. In addition, the curriculum is adapted to suit the needs of children with learning difficulties and there are effective and robust strategies in place which enable these pupils to make good progress.

The RE curriculum has undergone a complete review in order to implement the 'Here I am' RE programme and also the relationship education programme 'In the Beginning', in line with diocesan recommendations. This is now in the process of being embedded across the school.

In addition, resources have been improved and a progressive cycle for the teaching about other faiths implemented. RE learning is enriched through visits to places such as Clifton Cathedral and Glastonbury Tor.

A wide range of enrichment and fund raising activities enables pupils to develop a real understanding of our diverse culture and our response, as Christians, to those in need. These opportunities include 'Story Box', authors' visits, world music and fund raising for CAFOD. In addition each class holds a fund raising event for a chosen charity including CLIC, Action aid, St Peter's hospice, NSPCC and British Heart Foundation.

The school is very aware of what it needs to do in order to improve further and this includes ensuring that reflection time is an integral part of teacher planning and also includes continuing to update and build resources within the school so that teaching and learning can further address the needs of all learners.

Grade 2

Leadership and Management of Religious Education

The leadership and management of RE is outstanding because of clear direction from the co-ordinator, in collaboration with the headteacher. Both work together as a team and, in turn, are effectively supported by the senior leadership team and governors.

The RE co-ordinator is active and committed in her work and support for the school, providing an excellent role model for others who are less confident in the subject. She

has high expectations of teachers and this, combined with a consultative approach and close working links with governors, has resulted in shared goals and expectations. Whole staff annual reviews of the school's mission statement, aims and values, further enhance teachers' knowledge and ownership of this shared vision.

This team effort has contributed significantly to raising standards in the subject and to providing pupils with access to an enriched and balanced curriculum. Pupil progress is very effectively monitored with a clear emphasis on gospel values and raising standards in religious education.

The school is rightly proud of its inclusivity. It successfully provides for children with learning difficulties as well as for those who are gifted and talented. Work in R.E lessons is carefully differentiated by teachers to encourage children of all abilities to access the teachings of Jesus and to gain an understanding and knowledge of the Catholic faith. Overall, assessments of pupils' progress are incisive and give teachers a clear picture of children who may be working above or below the expected outcomes for that age group, allowing them to re-visit ideas where necessary, or to target certain pupils with differentiated questions or written work.

An inclusive and engaging liturgy is achieved through close collaboration with the parish priest.

Grade 1