



INSPECTION REPORT

School: St Bernard's Catholic Primary School
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URN: 109246
DfES Number: 801 3403

Headteacher: Mr Adrian Wilson
Chair of Governors: Mrs Sarah Jewell

Date of inspection: 28th and 29th February 2008
Date of previous inspection: 23rd and 24th June 2003
Reporting Inspector: Mr P Bates

Description of School

St Bernard's is a smaller than average primary school catering for pupils aged 4-11 years. It primarily serves the parish of St Bernard's in Shirehampton. There are 139 pupils on roll of whom 55% are Catholics. This percentage has been declining over the past two years but looks set to rise next year. Shirehampton is a closely knit community, which has been designated as an area of deprivation. However, the numbers of pupils in the school taking free school meals is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. Attainment on entry is varied. Most of the pupils have some experience, either full or part time, of pre-school provision. It is a very inclusive school and is recognised by the local education authority as a school that will willingly accept pupils regardless of their academic, physical or emotional ability.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St Bernard's has a very strong Catholic ethos. The committed leadership from the Headteacher, Staff and Governors is instrumental in effectively monitoring and developing the school's Catholic identity. Relationships within the school are very good and based on Christian care and concern for others. The Mission Statement is reflected in daily activities, with inclusion of all pupils central to the school's vision. As one parent commented this school has 'an excellent nurturing environment'. The pupil's spiritual and moral development is very good and this is reflected in their behaviour and attitudes. They feel valued, respected and listened to. The pupils make good progress throughout the school.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

Good progress has been made on the issues raised at the last inspection. The monitoring and evaluation of the teaching of Religious Education has been further developed. The Co-ordinator together with the Headteacher has carried out a great deal of work in this area. However, due to her being seconded to the local authority for this academic year, further development has been put on hold until her return. A thorough review of the types and styles of worship has been carried out and the staff are more confident to celebrate worship in a variety of ways. Religious Education now has the status of a core subject. It has an allocated budget and a link governor has been appointed.

Grade 2

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school has good capacity to improve further. Self evaluation is of good quality and the areas for development have been correctly identified. Staff and Governors were involved in the review process. The Headteacher is aware of the school's strengths and development needs. All staff are committed to the improvement and success of the school. The school Action Plan includes targets for improving standards in Religious Education and developing the prayer and spiritual life of the pupils. The school has begun implementing some of the planned actions. One objective in every teacher's performance management is related to the Catholic ethos of the school.

Grade 2

What the school should do to improve further

- 1 Regularly monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning to ensure appropriate standards are being achieved throughout the school
- 2 Fully introduce the new assessment materials to include the levelling of pupils' work
- 3 Ensure all pupils have a firm knowledge and understanding of formal prayers

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

Leadership and Management are focused on maintaining and developing the school's Catholic identity. The school's vision statement contains the words 'we will make the best use of the talents given to us by God'. Pupils are aware of this and understand how it relates to the ethos of the school. Attractive displays and artefacts around the school reflect the school's Christian mission. The Governors are very supportive and are always invited to attend training with the staff. They are regularly informed about the school's religious life. Pupils display respect towards each other and adults. They value the friendly, caring attitude of the staff, who listen to them and encourage their learning. Pupils' views are taken into consideration through a school council and their ideas have been acted upon. The Leadership promotes the spiritual and moral development of the pupils very well. Good links exist with the parish and the parish priest is well known to the pupils and parents. Masses are celebrated regularly both in school and in the adjacent parish church.

Grade 1

Collective Worship

There is a wide variety of opportunity for prayer and worship throughout the school. Pupils respond to all forms of collective worship with respect and reverence. They pray regularly at the beginning and end of the day, and before and after meals. They are fully aware of the school prayers, which are said throughout the day, but they need to have a

better knowledge and understanding of formal prayers, such as the 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary', which they should use regularly. There is a programme of school Masses in which pupils are actively involved. There are planned whole school and key stage assemblies. The Friday assembly is linked to the Gospel reading for the coming Sunday. Good use of the interactive white board and the excellent singing of the pupils enhance these assemblies. There are numerous themed assemblies during the year, which are led by the pupils, to which parents are invited. Each classroom has an RE area which provides a good focus for worship. Worship makes a good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils.

Grade 2

Community Cohesion

The school's contribution to community cohesion is very good. There is an inclusive and welcoming ethos in the school and pupils know they are valued. Treating each other with dignity and respect features in the School Mission Statement and is very evident in the daily life of the school. Religious Education includes the study of other world religions and pupils showed good knowledge of aspects of Judaism and Islam. There are good resources available to support this learning. Many opportunities are given for pupils to work with those from other schools particularly in the local area. There is a strong link with the local Catholic Comprehensive School. Visitors from other backgrounds are invited to share their experiences and expertise with the pupils. A visit from an African drumming group and a visit by key stage 1 pupils to the Commonwealth Museum to look at African culture were thoroughly enjoyed. The school works closely with the diocese and the local authority. Staff from the school have led in-service training in other schools and the deputy head is at present on secondment to the local authority to develop ICT at key stage 3. Pupils demonstrate their compassion for others by regularly raising money for national and local charities. Parents are welcomed into the school for numerous activities and they comment favourably on the 'family feel' of the school.

Grade 2

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

The quality and provision for Religious Education is good. Pupils enter school with varying degrees of knowledge and understanding of the faith. This could become an issue if the number of Catholic entrants decreases. The good teaching, the Catholic life and the ethos which pervades the school ensure that pupils achieve well and make good progress. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they have reached a good standard. Teachers ensure that standards expected in literacy are successfully transferred to work in Religious Education. Pupils have a good knowledge of the life of Jesus and about many stories from the Bible. Pupils generally make good progress, but there is some disparity in the standards of achievement between similar age groups in different classes. There is very good moral development. Pupils are polite and their behaviour is very good, both in class and around the school. Pupils are confident that if they have any

problems with their work they can ask for help from the teachers and learning support assistants.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good with some outstanding teaching observed. The teachers use a variety of teaching styles in their lessons which help keep pupils interest and enable quality learning to take place. The provision for pupils with differing abilities is good with work well matched to their needs. Pupils show great enthusiasm in their lessons. When pupils in key stage 1 were asked how they would have felt at the Last Supper, they gave lovely, thoughtful answers; 'I would have felt sad as Jesus was about to die' and 'I would have felt happy because I was with Jesus'. The excellent teaching assistants give high quality help to the pupils who need support. Learning objectives are shared with the pupils at the beginning of the lessons and reviewed in the plenary. Art, Music, role play and ICT are incorporated into the teaching. Monitoring and assessment systems are being developed and some levelling of work has taken place. Scrutiny of pupils' work takes place but not systematically. Each teacher has a folder with assessment sheets from the end of each topic but there is no evidence at the moment that this information is used to improve learning. Assessment needs to be embedded into the work of the school. Pupils in key stage 2 are developing their 'Journey in Faith' books which will provide an evidence base for progress and achievement. Written work develops as pupils' progress through the school. It is well marked, giving suitable praise and developmental comments. Parents receive regular information about the topics their children are studying.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good and suitable for the age of the learners. It follows the diocesan 'Here I Am' scheme and receives 10% of curriculum time as required by the Bishop's Conference. All teachers teach Religious Education and have attended the diocesan modular teaching course. In lessons, pupils are encouraged to question, discuss and investigate topics. Pupils in key stage 2 know how to use Bibles independently to resource information. The curriculum makes a significant contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. One inset day per year is used to support the teaching of Religious Education. In addition, the Mission Statement is reviewed by staff and governors at the beginning of every academic year. The school has adopted the Personal Relationship programme 'In the Beginning'. This has been agreed by the Governors and been presented to the parents. It is monitored by the Co-ordinator. A school policy for its use needs to be written and agreed.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The Co-ordinator for Religious Education, who is also the Deputy Head, has achieved a good deal since the last Inspection. She has been seconded to the local authority for this academic year and her role is being undertaken by the Headteacher. Due to his heavy workload, there has been a slowing of developments this year. However, he has high expectations of staff and his consultative approach encourages them to work effectively; a very good team spirit exists. Some monitoring of teaching and learning has taken place but this needs to be further developed. Although there is no formal induction process for staff new to Catholic education, they are given in house support and encouraged to attend the diocesan courses. Newly qualified teachers also attend relevant courses. Religious Education is fairly well resourced but it is acknowledged that more children's books need to be purchased for the library. The Co-ordinator attends the in-service opportunities provided by the diocese and passes information on to staff.

Grade 2