

DIOCESE OF MIDDLESBROUGH

Inspection of Religious Education
Collective Worship
and
The Catholic Life of the School



School: St Benedict's Catholic VA Primary School

Address: Mersey Road
Redcar
TS10 1LS

URN: 134706

Head Teacher: Mrs Mary E Henry

Chair: Mr Anthony Montague

Date: 1st April 2014

Inspector: Paul Welford

Date & Grade of Last Inspection: 24th Jan 2011, Good

Overall Grade for this Inspection: Good

INTRODUCTION

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Bishop of Middlesbrough (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school. The Inspection reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school's witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation. The Inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers.

What Inspection Grades mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding Catholic school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a Catholic school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	These features, though of adequate quality, require improvement to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate Catholic school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils.

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Benedict's is much larger than the average size primary school. It was formed in 2005 from the amalgamation of two primary schools, St Dominic's and St Alban's. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. The vast majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The school serves an area with above average deprivation as measured by the school deprivation indicator. Sixty two per cent of pupils are baptized Catholics as are 64% of teaching staff. The school building is modern and spacious and shares its site with its secondary feeder school – Sacred Heart.

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll: 432

Planned Admission Number of Pupils: 379 (+39 Nursery)

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 62%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian Denominations: 20%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 3%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 12%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 5.6%

Teaching Staff:

Full-time Teachers: 14

Part-time Teachers: 3

Percentage of Catholic Teachers: 64.2%

Number of teachers with CCRS: 1

Support Staff:

Full-time Classroom Support Staff: 16

Part-time Classroom Support Staff: 3

Percentage of Catholic Classroom Support Staff: 3

Percentage of learning time given to R.E: 10% all years

Parishes served by the School: St Augustine & Sacred Heart

1. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

MAIN FINDINGS

St Benedict's is a good school. It is a welcoming community which places great emphasis on the value of care and respect for others through a constancy in relating and linking the principal values set out in the Gospels and Catholic teaching to everyday life.

Standards in Religious Education at the end of KS2 are average but an increasing proportion of pupils are working above an average standard in lower year groups. The school's own training supported by external Diocesan provision is beginning to have a positive impact on the accuracy of assessment and teachers' expectations of achievement at all levels.

The school has an effective tracking system which is not yet sufficiently developed to ensure leaders at all levels, but especially governors, have access to regular, good quality summative data that is based on firmly moderated judgements related rigorously to the Religious Education level descriptors.

Pupils have a clear idea of the distinctive nature of their school. They are fully involved in the Catholic life of the school and contribute well to the wide range of liturgical activities and associated collective worship throughout the year. Pupils treat adults and each other with courtesy and respect and recognise the dignity of the individual. This is evident throughout all aspects of the school life.

Leaders and managers are committed to ensuring their school's vision, both within and outside the school community, is understood. They ensure that parents and the wider community consistently see the distinctive nature of Catholic Education and its underpinning values demonstrated in their school.

What the school needs to do to improve further:

- Increase teachers' accuracy of judgements as regards the national levels of attainment in Religious Education.
- Ensure that pupils' work is regularly monitored.
- Focus on strategies to raise attainment, especially at the end of KS2, to ensure pupils achieve outcomes in line with expectations set out in the recent Diocesan Position Paper.
- Streamline the tracking system to increase the amount of performance data that is made available to governors.

2. PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils, taking into account of variations between groups.

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is good. They can identify the religious aspects of their school and the relationship between this practice and that of their parish community. Pupils respond well to the call to service expected by the Catholic community and there is a wide range of activities in which pupils participate to exemplify this including, playground friends, tuck shop monitors, gardeners and a developing group of pupils who directly work alongside the Chaplaincy Team.

Discussion with children indicated that this response to service and to the needs of others is a thread running through school life to which they make a significant contribution in all year groups. This resonates well with declarations forming part of the Mission Statement set out in the school's Religious Education Policy, i.e. St Benedict's desires that the '*principles of the Gospel permeate all aspects of school life*' and the school aims to foster: '*a spirit of co-operation.....within an appreciation of the need for tolerance, courtesy and good manners*'.

The standards pupils achieve in Y6 are broadly average. In other year groups, tracking data indicates pupils' age related achievement levels are higher with tracking data for the current Y3 showing approximately two thirds of pupils working at levels 2a-3c. Given their starting points, pupils make expected progress although work scrutiny revealed a minority exceeding expected progress. The more able were not always given sufficient challenge.

Books are well marked and there is adequate to good progress over time. However, feedback to pupils is largely confined to comments on the quality of their work with less evidence to indicate next steps to improve. Pupils were not given the opportunity to respond to written feedback. The written work seen and classroom observations show that the school's focus on ensuring an appropriate match of work to pupils' ability is improving their outcomes.

A substantial portfolio of standardised work from both within school and from the local primary cluster group is used effectively with staff. This has improved the understanding of grade requirements at all levels and evidence in pupils' books shows levelling of work is improving steadily though still not accurate enough.

Pupils' response to and participation in acts of collective worship are good. They regularly plan and lead both assemblies and wider celebrations of the liturgical year. Pupils value the opportunity to actively plan the content of their class assemblies. Pupils also welcome their direct involvement in the wider parish, e.g. as altar servers and in preparation for First Holy Communion. The degree of planning and involvement in Acts of Worship enables pupils to have a good understanding of the religious seasons and also develop skills in the interpretation of scripture and appropriate use of religious artefacts, hymns and prayers.

• The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school	2
• How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	3
• How well do pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	2

3. PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic education

The school uses the Come and See Religious Education programme as recommended by the Diocese. A total of 10% curriculum time is allocated to Religious Education in line with the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. All staff receive in-service training or support relating to the Catholic Life of the school. This includes meetings with the Primary Cluster Group in which toolkits relating to the 'Come and See' scheme and ideas for Collective Worship are discussed and subsequently used effectively by the school.

The majority of teaching seen across year groups enables pupils to make good progress as learners. In most lessons, pupils are keen to work and participate fully at all levels. They are given opportunity to think and reflect on their learning and how the topic can be related to their own lives. For example, in Year 6, the story of Lazarus was skilfully explored by a series of searching questions that elicited some excellent responses from pupils indicating a critical understanding of the meaning of events within the Gospel story itself and how these relate to their own lives. In this same lesson, effective use was made of classroom support with the teaching assistant carefully scaffolding responses on the interactive white board as the lesson proceeded.

Planning is thorough and teachers have good subject knowledge of Religious Education. Lessons move at a good pace with a variety of activities to effect learning. Talk partners and more general focussed discussion are widely used and the degree of challenge enables all age groups to engage with the topic and receive good feedback allowing teachers to reframe the learning as necessary. Good match of work to pupils was evident in each lesson observed. For example in a Year 4 lesson centred on the theme of 'Giving' at Lent and Easter, the teacher provided a set of carefully differentiated visual stimuli which were then linked by pupils, depending on ability, to a hierarchical lesson structure of 'describe', 'give reasons' and for higher ability pupils, 'make links'.

The Religious Education curriculum provides good opportunities for spiritual, moral and vocational development. There is a wide range of activities and events for pupils to support, including a range of charities; and also to engage with the wider parish community. An extra-curricular activity was observed in which parents and pupils met together to make An Easter Garden to take away. Parents, pupils, teachers and the parish priest were all involved in making this event an active spiritual reflection on Easter. Other enrichment within the curriculum allows pupils to explore and engage with the faith and beliefs of other world religions, principally Islam and Judaism.

Acts of collective worship are well co-ordinated, well-resourced and carefully planned to follow the liturgical year. Resources and advice on their use are managed well by the Religious Education coordinator and the two staff members constituting the school chaplaincy team. This successfully brings the richness of the Catholic tradition to life for the pupils and enables them to participate in a wide range of activities. For example, collective worship in a Y5 class brought together a mix of prayer, singing and meditation on a Bible reading which generated a spiritual atmosphere enhanced further by two class members delivering a short violin piece.

The learning environment is well ordered and clearly of a Catholic nature. Carefully established and maintained prayer corners are very clearly evident in all classrooms. The school maintains high moral and ethical standards through the practice and example of its staff and by ensuring the 'statements I can live by' themes are fully recognised and expounded in the weekly religious activities, teaching and assemblies. Behaviour of pupils in the classroom and outside in corridors and playground is exemplary and the principles of Catholic Life and teaching are very evident in the way pupils are welcoming, polite and kind to other adults and each other.

• The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education	2
• The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning	2
• The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2
• The quality of provision for the Catholic life of the school	2

4. LEADERS, MANAGERS AND GOVERNORS

How effective leaders, managers and governors are in developing the Catholic life of the school

Leaders, Managers and Governors demonstrate a clear commitment to the Church's mission in education. Although the Mission statement is not publicly displayed in the school, there are adequate examples of pupils' work and displays which celebrate and highlight the school's commitment to the teachings of Jesus, the Catholic tradition and the Church's moral purpose. A set of 'Statements to Live By' are prominently on display in the entrance area and provide the seed for weekly reflections in assemblies held in all classes. These themes are also carried over into the school newsletter extending witness to the wider community. The Mission Statement is under review in preparation for it potentially being reconstructed as the school is likely to become part of a Multi Academy Trust with local Catholic primary schools and the Sacred Heart RC Academy.

Monitoring activities by leaders and governors provide a solid base of evidence to accurately determine the strengths and areas for development of the school. The new Religious Education co-ordinator, appointed in September, has taken steps to ensure termly periodic assessment is accurately informed by formative evidence. The planning and implementation of collective worship are well resourced and a dedicated chaplaincy team provides good support, as needed, for non-Catholic teaching and support staff. Planning is shared through half-termly meetings with the Religious Education co-ordinator which results in the Church festivals and the religious seasons being celebrated in full with children made fully aware of their meaning and parents and the wider community, including priest and catechists adding to this witness. Staff and pupils show a high regard for the Catholic life of the school including collective worship.

Leaders, managers and governors adequately monitor the progress of pupils and the quality of teaching and learning. They know the school's strengths and areas for development and the Religious Education governor meets formally with the school leadership team to review the school improvement plan. The governing body is clearly committed to maintaining the distinctive Catholic nature of the school and to provide both support and challenge for school leaders. Governors aspire to see improvements under new leadership for the school and are proactive in developing their skills through training and their knowledge of the school through better information. Although improving, the amount and quality of the data governors receive, especially progress data are not yet in enough depth and frequency. For example, Religious Education attainment is not given in the Headteachers Report.

The leadership team have introduced a regular and formal system of monitoring including, lesson observations, short themed observations, work scrutiny and systematic observation of collective worship. This is increasingly adding a detailed body of evidence to judge provision, hold staff to account and plan for the future. However there is a need for more detailed monitoring of data and in particular to incorporate the Diocesan Guidelines on levels of attainment in Religious Education into the assessment, recording and reporting system. Evidence from the Religious Education co-ordinator's file shows the school takes part in the local area Religious Education moderation meetings where examples of levelled work are discussed but it is not clear how consistently this information is shared with staff to inform their assessment of pupils'.

Information provided to parents and other stakeholders is good. A quarterly school newsletter keeps parents well informed of religious activities, festivals and events. The 'open door' policy and approachable attitude of school leaders is commented on positively by parents and the school is seen as having strong links with the parish community.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well leaders, managers and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school, including collective worship, and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well leaders, managers and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils 	3