

DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Report of Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Name of School: St. Bede's Catholic Primary School & Nursery

Inspection Date: Spring Term 2015

Information about the school

St Bede's Catholic Primary is a voluntary aided two form entry school with nursery in Chadwell Heath in the London Borough of Redbridge and part of the diocese of Brentwood. It serves the parish of St Bede's Chadwell Heath with a small number of pupils coming from adjoining parishes. There are currently 469 pupils aged 4-11 on roll and the school is over subscribed. The proportion of Catholic pupils is 91.4%. There is an above average number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and 24.7% of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is around the national average with a small number of pupils who receive the pupil premium.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Bede's is not only an outstanding school, it is exceptional both in its effectiveness in developing pupils' religious literacy and in its success in providing experiences in ways of Catholic living and believing. This is as a result of the vision, hard work and dedication of the headteacher who has inspired the whole school community with his commitment to the Church's mission in education. Pupil achievement and progress, the provision for Catholic education and the capacity for sustained improvement are all outstanding. Prayer and worship are integral to all that the school does and opportunities for spiritual and moral development are interwoven through religious education and the wider curriculum. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what it means to be part of a Catholic community. The headteacher and senior leaders are outstanding role models and have put in place a number of initiatives linked to the Catholic life of the school which are leading to good outcomes for all groups. Pastoral care is very good and shared by all members of the school community. Relationships are excellent and pupils feel safe and well cared for. Pupils and parents greatly appreciate the very many opportunities offered to develop a wide range of interests through school clubs and lunch time activities. Parents also welcome the high standard of education, the Catholicity of the school and the way their children's prayer life is supported and developed. Pupils' standards of attainment are in line with and often exceed diocesan expectations.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement. The last inspection in 2008 identified no areas for development other than those already stated by the school in its self evaluation. Since then not only have standards in religious education continued to rise due to the implementation of the agreed understanding of levels of attainment which have informed lesson planning and assessment, but the school has maintained a constant drive to move forward by developing the use of new ideas and technologies to further enhance classroom education. Accurate self evaluation is informed by rigorous monitoring of teaching, planning and achievement for all groups within the

school. The school provides continuous professional development for all staff and has put in place effective strategies to share good practice and support new teachers.

The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors have a clear vision for the Catholicity of the school and the central place of prayer, worship and religious education. The headteacher ensures that all staff are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and improve their skills through staff meetings and attendance at diocesan led training. Excellent support is given to new and non Catholic teachers. Five teachers hold the CCRS qualification and the school supports those who wish to undertake the course.

The current leadership has an excellent capacity to maintain effectiveness. The experienced headteacher shows outstanding leadership of a Catholic community through his commitment to all aspects of school life. In recent years senior staff have been given leadership responsibilities and are well placed to continue and build on current good practice. They share the clear focus on prayer and worship in which they are well supported by all staff and the local parish priest who is also a governor and a frequent visitor to the school. The governing body is dedicated, well informed, has a wide range of expertise and is fully involved in the life of the school. Robust systems are in place to develop and strengthen initiatives which lead to good outcomes for all pupils. The current religious education subject leader who is also the deputy headteacher is very well placed to support colleagues through monitoring and demonstration lessons. He has attended diocesan training linked to the religious education scheme 'Come and See' through which the school delivers the content of the revised Curriculum Directory for religious education.

What the school should do to improve further

As identified in the School Improvement Plan

- Develop links with other Catholic schools in the deanery to put in place moderation meetings and share good practice.
- Develop opportunities which will further promote spirituality including liturgical dance and gospel singing.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The mission statement, 'Shine like a lantern in the presence of the Lord' is prominent throughout the school and known by the whole community. Pupils are given many opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. They are keen to take on responsibilities including membership of the School Council and as prefects. Year 6 pupils run a coffee morning each term after Sunday mass to raise funds for clothing for the annual trip to the Isle of Wight. Several local, national and international charities including Macmillan Cancer Support, Cafod and a local refugee centre to which pupils contribute items of food are supported each year. Pupils are encouraged to see themselves as part of a global community with responsibilities for other people and the environment. Behaviour is excellent and pupils show respect for adults and each other. They take full responsibility for themselves and their actions. Conversations with pupils indicated that they are proud of their school and value the way they are supported by their teachers and other members of staff.

Prayer and worship are central to school life at St Bede's. During the inspection opportunities to witness a range of collective worship including a 'Day of continuous prayer for Lent' which was open to parents and parishioners, indicated the importance the school places on its Catholic identity. Pupils are given many opportunities to participate fully in masses, assemblies and class acts of worship. They attend parish mass during the week on a rota basis and help to plan and lead the termly mass for the school, welcoming the community, acting as altar servers, writing bidding prayers and reading. The school choir and orchestra play a major part in worship which is vibrant and engaging. Recently appointed 'Guardian angels' lead Monday worship and reflect on Sunday's gospel by asking the headteacher to comment on aspects which need further explanation. Pupils have a very good

knowledge of the Church's liturgical year with its seasons and celebrations. Older pupils are also able to make links between the sacraments and the life of Christ. The environment for prayer and worship is excellent. Each class has an attractive prayer table which includes a lantern and is used as a focus for class worship. Pupils are developing the ability to pray in different ways and at different times. They can use scripture, the traditional prayers of the church, meditation and their own prayers, many examples of which were seen during the inspection. Pupils are able to apply aspects of Jesus' life and teaching to their own lives and understand that a sense of service is part of being a member of a Catholic community.

Pastoral care is very good and given a high priority by staff and governors who work closely together to promote the spiritual development of pupils and the Catholic life of the community. Coaching and mentoring are available to support pupils who need it. A programme of personal, social, cultural and moral education is timetabled for each class and contributes to pupils' understanding of themselves as part of the modern world. In conversations pupils said they felt safe, well cared for and know that all members of staff are there to help. Pupils are involved in decision making and citizenship through the school council and value their school and all it offers. They know they are respected, listened to and encouraged to help each other. Parents speak very highly of the school, the headteacher and the care given to their children. They appreciate the support the school gives to the whole family. They praise the excellent quality of education, the support given to their children's prayer life and the commitment and approachability of staff.

Pupil attainment and progress in religious education is outstanding. The school carefully evaluates progress and standards and indicates that from a relatively low base pupils make very good progress year on year so that by the time they reach Year 6 attainment reaches and sometimes exceeds diocesan expectations. Lessons observed during the inspection were good or outstanding and pupils worked with interest and commitment. Pupils in an outstanding Year 6 lesson showed a very good knowledge of scripture. They were familiar with the layout of the bible and could link aspects of the Old Testament with the life of Christ. Early years pupils are given a good foundation which is built upon as they progress through the school. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are beginning to show real understanding of the structure of the mass. In Key Stage 2 they are able to reflect on the opportunities Lent offers for spiritual growth. In conversation pupils said they enjoy their religious education lessons and like the wide range of activities involved. They are eager to participate and work well together whether in groups or pairs. They have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and are able to apply religious ideas to their own lives. Workbooks are very well presented, show coverage of the curriculum and indicate excellent progress made by all groups.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

The effectiveness of leadership at all levels is outstanding. The headteacher is well supported by his deputy as he demonstrates excellent leadership of the school through the way he inspires and promotes the provision for Catholic life. He is deeply committed to excellence and achieves this by rigorous monitoring, analysis and challenge. He communicates a clear vision to the whole community which is shared by governors and staff who are all dedicated to the Church's mission in education. An example of this is his weekly storytelling assemblies where he links Christian values with everyday situations. Under his leadership the partnership between school, home and parish is excellent and families are helped to access appropriate support for their needs. The leadership team give priority to Catholic Life and religious education in the school improvement plan and have developed a system of self-evaluation which is detailed and accurate. Together school leaders have a very good knowledge of areas for development in religious education and are well placed to support colleagues.

The subject leader together with phase leaders monitors religious education by means of lesson observations, work scrutiny and joint planning which is followed by feedback to individual teachers. He compiles a detailed termly audit for governors which includes teaching, learning, classroom practice, assessment, attainment and progress. In it he has identified the benefit to pupils of access to bibles and there are plans to increase the number of class sets. There is currently a very strong focus on planning and assessment as the school implements the 'Come and See' religious education programme and the revised Curriculum Directory. The school has put in place strategies to give further

challenge to all groups of pupils including high achievers. Leadership gives staff development a high priority and include teaching assistants who play a key role in the school. A programme of diocesan guest speakers during Lent are leading to an improved understanding of the distinctive nature of a Catholic school, the place of prayer and what goes to make an outstanding religious education lesson.

Governors are very active in the life of the school and are involved with the review of policy and procedure. They receive information through the headteacher's report and frequent visits which put them in a good position to challenge and support effectively. An annual 'Governors' Day' is held when all governors are present in the school to meet staff, pupils and parents. There is a programme of close liaison with subject leaders which enables the experienced link governor to have a detailed understanding of developments in religious education and Catholic life. The local parish priest plays a major role in the life of the school. He visits every week for a 'Quality time' session with pupils and a planned programme of masses and liturgies. He also acts as an additional resource in classroom religious education.

Leaders ensure that the school is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. Other faiths are well taught and supported by a programme of visits to other places of worship. This helps to give pupils a good understanding of their local community. An 'International Mass' held in the church celebrated the range of backgrounds and cultures which are part of the school and parish community culminating in a procession with flags of many nations and sharing of food. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop a sense of service within school and to show compassion for others through charitable fund raising and involvement in the local and wider community. They are involved in selecting which charities should be supported. Older pupils are developing an understanding of the theology underpinning this work. Opportunities for spiritual development ensure that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences. Regular retreat days are held for Year 5 pupils and Year 6 has visited Brentwood Cathedral. Parents are welcomed to many school events and are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress. They appreciate the good level of contact with the school which includes regular questionnaires and curriculum information letters which enable them to support their children's education and faith journey.

Provision

Grade 1

Provision for prayer and worship at St Bede's is outstanding. Eucharistic celebrations, prayer and liturgies are central to the life of the school. They are very well planned and contribute greatly to pupils' spiritual development. They often include visual presentations, bible readings drama, singing and music. In class pupils were observed reading and writing their own prayers and preparation for the Easter production was taking place. Pupils plan and lead collective worship in their classrooms and are given opportunities for meditation and personal reflection. Older pupils are given responsibilities to share their understanding of the Stations of the Cross with younger children as they journey round the school. The learning environment is vibrant and colourful. Each classroom has a very attractive prayer focus with a holy water font at the door, religious artefacts and display boards which include children's work. Masses and age appropriate liturgies are celebrated in school throughout the year. A weekly newsletter 'The Lantern' informs parents and families about the Catholic life of the school as well as giving details of the themes of assemblies and celebrating pupils' achievements. Families and parishioners are invited to many celebrations. Pupils are given abundant opportunities to develop their knowledge of Catholic traditions. Links with the local parish are very good with many pupils and families active in its life.

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is excellent. During the inspection lessons observed were good or outstanding. They are planned carefully with clear learning intentions and an interesting range of activities. The school is making a major investment in resources including more sets of bibles for Key Stage 2 which is leading led to increased familiarity with scripture. Pupils benefit from the high profile given throughout the school to religious education lessons. In all classes observed pupils were fully engaged and making very good progress. Teachers respond well to pupils' comments and take every opportunity to develop understanding. Higher order questioning was evident in lessons observed. Very good support by teaching assistants enables all groups of pupils to make progress. This was is a feature of lessons especially in Early Years. Marking is positive, interactive

and enables pupils to identify next steps in their learning. Very good monitoring, assessment, planning and tracking supports the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is outstanding. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education and the school intends to add to this. The religious education programme 'Come and See' has been in place for two years and is now embedded. The headteacher gives religious education a central place in the life of the school and this is demonstrated by the budget devoted to it and the current level of resources. Attractive religious education displays around the school emphasise the centrality of faith to the work of the community. The curriculum enables pupils to become aware of their responsibility for each other and their environment. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development. The support given to families through a wide range of extra curricular activities gives a strong sense of community to the school. There is every indication that current high standards are likely to be maintained or improved.

The inspector would like to express her thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.