

DIOCESE OF LEEDS



DIOCESAN BOARD FOR INSPECTIONS

SECTION 48 FINAL REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
BARKSTON ASH CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
London Road, Barkston Ash, Tadcaster
LS24 9PS

School URN	121635
School DfE Number	815 3369
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Chair of Governors	Mrs. Karen Howell
Headteacher	Mrs. Anne O'Neill
RE Subject Leader	Mr. Andrew Bastable
Date of Inspection	13 & 14 June 2011
Section 48 Inspector/s	Mrs. Marie McClelland Accompanied by Mrs. Marie Evans

INTRODUCTION

The Inspection of Barkston Ash Catholic Primary School was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Leeds Diocesan Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Bishop of Leeds. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors (2010).

The inspectors attended a whole school Catholic Worship (CW) session, observed Religious Education (RE) lessons and class-based CW sessions in each class in the school. Discussions with staff, parents, pupils, Parish Priest and the Chair of Governors were held over two days. A range of evidence was seen including the RE subject leader's file, planning and assessment files, monitoring and evaluation records, minutes of Governors meetings and head teacher's report, *Parent Voice* sheets, and a representative sample of pupils' written work in RE together with examples of pupil work on display around the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Barkston Ash Catholic Primary School is a small school of 115 pupils serving the Catholic parish of St Joseph the Worker at Sherburn-in-Elmet, the local village of Barkston and an extensive rural area. Currently, 50% of its places are offered to pupils from non-Catholic families. Owing to the school's wide catchment area, the majority of pupils travel to school by bus or by car. Admissions since 2008 have been at maximum limit and the school is currently oversubscribed for 2011. Pupils are taught in four mixed-age, mixed ability classes. The numbers eligible for free school meals and the numbers on the special educational needs register are below the national average.

Staffing has been stable over the last four years and the headteacher has been in post since 2003. There are 5.4 full-time equivalent teachers, two of whom are Catholics and one with CCRS qualification. A very experienced team of four support staff accompanies classroom teachers. A new deputy headteacher, appointed in September 2010, replaced a staff member who was appointed to a headship elsewhere. The new deputy is also the RE subject leader.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection Grades: 1 is Outstanding, 2 is Good, 3 is Satisfactory, 4 is Inadequate

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

2

This is a summative judgement based on the 2 judgements below: Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils, provision for Catholic education (includes effectiveness of leaders and managers) and capacity for sustained improvement.

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS, PROVISION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

2

CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT

2

Main findings

Barkston Ash Catholic Primary School is a good school with many outstanding features. It is a welcoming and friendly place where adult voices are always calm and respectful and pupils radiate a strong sense of belonging and self-esteem. The distinctive Catholic nature of the school is readily perceptible from the variety of thoughtful and attractive displays rich in colour and symbol, often evincing spiritual responses.

Pupils are immensely proud of their school. They know and can articulate their own contribution to its strong ethos of mutual respect, support and forgiveness. Commitment of all staff to this ethos is very evident and the building is beautifully clean and well organized. Discussion with parents indicates that the school's 'open door' policy affirms them as their children's prime educators and the school's regular communications through various newsletters, *Parent Voice* feedback forms, word-of-mouth and website notices are greatly appreciated.

Since the last inspection in 2008, there has been significant change in the membership of the Governing Body (GB) bringing with it additional expertise and commitment. The Parish Priest is a great strength to the school both as key member of the GB but also because of his insightful perception of needs and expectations of the wider community and how the school can, and must continue to respond to these.

Pupils enjoy their work in RE and they make good progress in those lessons where teaching is outstanding. This is particularly evident when planning is fine-tuned and pupils have time to analyse what they have learned and to look forward to the next steps. Support for pupils with particular learning needs is outstanding. Recently reviewed assessment procedures are helping pupils to be aware of attainment standards in RE but they also need to be converted into an age-appropriate format to become self-motivating targets especially for more-able pupils. The Catholic Life of the school is vibrant and varied and the school deserves its good reputation in the area.

The capacity for sustained improvement is good because the GB has already shown a commitment to succession management in decisions about recruitment at senior

leadership level. The School Development Plan (SDP) is focused on the need for continuing development of all staff to affirm and promote the Catholic nature of the school and for due regard for parental voice and involvement. The aspects for improvement identified at the last inspection are now either *good* or *outstanding*.

WHAT THE SCHOOL NEEDS TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Accelerate and consolidate pupil progress by utilizing pupil-friendly and age appropriate RE target reminders to ensure that all pupils know what they have to do and are self-motivated to move onto the next levels of attainment in RE.
- Further enrich provision for dedicated ‘prayer areas’ in line with recent diocesan guidelines *Proclaim the Glory of God*.
- Consider partnership with other Catholic primary schools for mutual sharing of best practice – especially in relation to the phased introduction of the new RE scheme recommended by the Diocese.
- Ensure that one of the five training days (or part thereof) is devoted to spiritual and emotional renewal for all staff to affirm and support them in their roles as key contributors to the succession management and Catholic life of the school.

PUPILS

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

2

The mission statement promises to enable each child to ‘enjoy the excitement of learning in an atmosphere of mutual love and respect’. That sense of excitement was palpable in Foundation & Key Stage 1 during inspection. High levels of listening and speaking skills in Class 1 enabled each pupil to articulate a personal statement of *belonging* to God’s family in preparation for a school/parish visit to Scarthingwell Church later in the month. Similarly, in Class 2, guided reflection on a storm theme through art and music fired imaginations as an entrée to the story of Jesus calming the storm at sea and ultimately to knowing Jesus as our constant protector and loving friend. Throughout the school pupils enjoy their work in RE and they are quite discerning about what constitutes an interesting RE lesson. They are respectful and impeccably behaved.

Support staff operate with impressive skill and sensitivity to ensure that all pupils engage with the well-planned RE curriculum. The need for more robust systems of pupil-tracking is appreciated so that attitudes to promoting attainment in RE genuinely mirror those for the other core subjects. Recent improvements show earnest commitment in this line, hence the grading is good rather than satisfactory.

The mission statement also promises to educate pupils ‘spiritually, emotionally, socially and intellectually’ and evidence for this is good. The CW programme is well planned around weekly ‘*Statements to Live By*’ and the Liturgical Calendar. Feedback from *Marian Bags*, *Travelling Crib* and *Wednesday Word* projects show that home-school links have valuable impact and parents regularly attend liturgical and other celebrations in school. A

variety of partnership and outreach work gives pupils the chance to be fund-raisers for good causes both local and global, to have vicarious experience of different lifestyles and cultures and to know and enjoy the fruits of being good ambassadors for their school community. The level of participation in this work is outstanding.

At CW sessions, even very young pupils are at ease with ritual and specialist vocabulary. All pupils join in confidently with different types of prayer and prayer styles and readily volunteer to read from scriptural passages. There is a need for some kind of visual & celebratory record of CW sessions to maximize their impact. Grading for this aspect is likely to increase when pupils engage in planning and delivering CW sessions themselves, without adult prompting. An audit of pupil views about further enrichment of *quiet prayer areas* might trigger such an initiative. Some pupils in Class 4, for instance, welcomed the opportunity to devise their own enactment of the story of Zachaeus within a teacher-led CW.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	2
Taking into account:	
• the quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
• the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
• pupils' attainment in Religious Education	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.	2

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic education.

1

The overall grade of *outstanding* for this aspect of inspection is indicative of the range of firmly embedded teaching styles and activities that were seen to sustain concentration, to motivate interest and to help pupils to assimilate their new learning. Teachers' subject knowledge ensured that high expectations of pupil capabilities and interest were uppermost at the planning stages of all lessons. Where such plans became over-ambitious, professional self-review was able to identify necessary remedies and adjustments. The school's claim to a 'skills based curriculum' was evident in all four classes. In Class 3, for instance, superb use of technology, varied craft and written activities, movement into partners and groups, ensured that talking, listening and thinking skills were extended to a very high level. At the plenary session, every pupil had an opinion about 'how St Peter became a follower of Jesus' and wanted to explain it. In Class 4, literacy reference skills were at a premium in the search for information about World Faiths.

Marking and feedback to pupils in written work is regular and consistent. Assessment initiatives in line with the new RE resource, *The Way, the Truth and the Life* (TWTL), are being phased in since September and the RE subject leader is confident that resultant

pupil-tracking and targeting will impact on standards. In-service links with other Catholic primary schools to share good practice on many aspects of TWTL would be of mutual benefit.

The RE curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for spiritual and moral development and an awareness and respect for people of other faiths – and none. Excellent relationships with the Catholic parish and catechists at Sherburn-in-Elmet indicate that non-Catholic pupils and their parents frequently attend the termly Family Mass in Church as well as school-based liturgical celebrations. There is an annual uptake of preparation for first sacraments and the school is a welcoming point of first contact for those enquiring about becoming Catholic. As a regular visitor to school, the Parish Priest offered many examples of how simple and subtle changes to the lay-out of the Hall for CW, for instance, help to sensitize the spirit. As a poet and writer of children’s books his participation in a Poetry Day with Class 3 highlighted how such stimulating and memorable activities could transform children’s self-esteem in a unique way and reveal creative pathways to prayer.

The quality of CW is outstanding starting with a whole school event on Mondays that sets the theme for the week and links with the readings from Sunday’s Mass. On weekdays, CW is class or Key Stage based ending with a Golden Book rewards assembly on Fridays. In an interesting reversal of roles, older pupils take it in turns each Monday morning to ‘check’ the Head Teacher’s CW plan and then set up and operate supportive technology at appropriate times in her delivery. All staff show a deep commitment to CW adapting its position in the daily timetable to suit pupils’ changing moods or specific concerns. The great strength of the CW sessions is the genuine faith sharing between staff and pupils that confirms the family ethos and lends added piquancy to hymns like ‘*Share the Light of Jesus, share the light that shows the way...*’ which they sing with feeling.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching in Religious Education.	1
The use of assessment to support learning in Religious Education.	2
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils’ needs.	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.	1

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School.

2

The GB has the expertise to meet school’s needs. It is influential in determining the direction of the Catholic life of the school through its constructive relationships with staff, parents and parish. Building and renovation work over the last two years has benefited from governor expertise. The GB operates an active curriculum committee and individual governor oversight of specific subjects and individual classes. The chair of governors runs the school library once a week and has very good rapport with pupils and staff. She is enthusiastic about her role, very open to ideas for improvement and has a pro-active

engagement with the school. As part of GB's commitment to the broad spectrum of succession management, an in-service *Day of Spirituality* for all staff was led by the Parish Priest last year and the need to share good practice with other Catholic primary schools is readily acknowledged. Governors were very deliberate about recruiting a deputy head with RE subject leader expertise and about earmarking sufficient funds to resource the new 'TWTL' R.E. programme.

The subject leader for RE has been in post since September with significant impact on formalising planning for CW and liturgies and also linking *Statements to Live By* to everyday life of the school. He has facilitated the introduction of the new RE scheme through regular discussion with and practical guidance for colleagues. Very good home-school links during the month of May generated a returned range of spontaneous and heartfelt prayers: '*for my granddad who is cycling the length of the country in 9 days; who is on a 6month tour of Afghanistan – may he return home safely*'; '*for schoolchildren preparing to sit exams – may they have patience to study and courage to succeed.*' Monitoring of the teaching of RE in all classes is not yet complete but written records of those that have been done mirror the quality seen at inspection.

The Head Teacher is an asset to the school especially in the way she leads and promotes a collaborative working environment. Her relationship with pupils, parents and staff reflects a deep personal spirituality and sets the tone for the calm and respectful ethos of the school. Under her leadership, RE features as a Performance Management focus and in the SDP. Discussion with parents affirmed approval for the school's Sex and Relationships programme and the success of community cohesion strategies. Partnerships with outside bodies and agencies as well as visits and visiting speakers have enriched Catholic life experiences for all pupils. Networking with five senior high schools ensures smooth transition for Yr6 pupils at the end of their primary phase. Concerns relating to access to public transport for these pupils in September were raised by parents but were outside the remit of this inspection.

These are the grades for leadership and management

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.	2
How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.	2
The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met.	1
How well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and pupil well-being.	2
How effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion.	2