

DIOCESE OF LEEDS



DIOCESAN BOARD FOR INSPECTION

SECTION 48 REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

OUR LADY & ST BRENDAN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bank
Idle
Bradford
BD10 0QA

School URN	107334
Chair of Governors	Mrs Moira Corcoran
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Springer
RE Subject Leaders	Mrs Anne Springer/Mrs Susan Carroll
E-mail address	aspringer@st-brendans.co.uk
Dates of Inspection	16 th & 17 th June 2011
S48 Inspector	Mr Joe Ginty

INTRODUCTION

The Inspection of Our Lady and St Brendan's 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 the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA 2010).

The inspector reviewed in detail the following aspects:

- the extent to which the pupils contribute to the Catholic life of the school;
- the effectiveness of the use of assessment to support learning in RE;
- the quality of (class-based) Collective Worship provided by the school;
- the effectiveness of the provision for the induction of new members of staff;
- the overall effectiveness of leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the school.

He shared class worship in Years R, 1, 4, 6 and a whole school act of Collective Worship led by Year 2, also attended by a good number of parents. He observed Religious Education (RE) lessons in Years 3 and 5. He held meetings with the chair of governors together with the second RE nominated governor, headteacher, deputy headteacher, RE subject co-leader, members of staff, pupil council and pupil members of the Dream-scheme project. He examined school documentation including the school's Self Evaluation Form (SEF), the RE Action Plan, monitoring, assessment and tracking records, completed parent and pupil questionnaires, samples of teacher planning and pupils' RE books.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Our Lady and St Brendan's is a smaller than average Catholic Primary school situated between the extensive housing areas of Ravenscliffe and Thorpe Edge. The school has an admission number of 30 and there are currently 189 pupils on roll of whom 38% are of the Catholic Faith and a further 57% of other Christian denominations.

The percentage of pupils whose first language not believed to be English is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average but there are no pupils with statements of special educational needs. The FSM index is above the national average. The school population is stable with average mobility. Pupil attainment on entry is generally below the national expectation particularly in language and personal, social and emotional development.

There are 9.3 full-time equivalent teachers of whom five are Catholic and one has CCRS.

The school has gained Healthy School status and is working towards Investor in Pupils and Arts Mark awards. The Local Authority recognises the school as an Enterprise Champion School.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

1

The above is a summative judgement based on the judgements made below:

- Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils
- Provision for Catholic education including the effectiveness of leaders and managers
- Capacity for sustained improvement

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS, PROVISION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

1

CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT

1

Main findings

Our Lady and St Brendan's school provides an outstanding quality of Catholic education. It is an extended community where catechesis and evangelisation are a living reality. Though situated in the recently extended parish of St Clare, the school's catchment covers the geographical area serving the former parishes of The Immaculate Conception, Idle and St. Brendan, Ravenscliffe and in so doing maintains a tradition that is of irreplaceable value to those communities. It is a cherished tradition summed up in the words of greeting located at the school entrance: *'Let us remember that as many hands build a house, so many hearts make a school'*.

The sense of belonging is tangible. In the words of one parent, *'I was aware the very first time I visited the school of the lovely atmosphere.'* It is a school community where all encounter Christ, are nourished by Him and are disciples for Him. The Spirit of God is alive in the school, giving strength and hope, promoting harmony, recognising and supporting growth. The strong sense of shared mission, partnership and collaboration are at the heart of the school's vision and this evangelical mission of the Church extends to the wider community through the school's very presence, its witness, its dialogue.

The outcomes for pupils, the provision for Catholic education, the effectiveness of leaders and managers and the school's capacity for sustained improvement are uniformly outstanding. Self-evaluation at all levels is grounded in rigorous and honest analysis. The governors and senior leadership team inspire the school community to work towards meeting an ambitious vision through the setting of challenging targets and regular review of the impact of their action. The school has a very clear idea of its own strengths and those areas it wishes to develop further.

WHAT THE SCHOOL NEEDS TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Encourage the older pupils to take a more pro-active role in preparing and leading acts of worship and facilitate this in the classroom setting.

PUPILS

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

1

Outcomes for all pupils are outstanding.

The pupils' Mission Statement proclaims, *'We all come to Our Lady and St Brendan's to learn. We all work together to be the best people we can'*. These are not merely words but the fundamental beliefs lived out by the pupils in their daily life at school. In the words of one of the younger children describing life at school, *'everybody is kind and loving'*, and in the words of another, *'the teachers are friendly and fun'*. All pupils regard school as a safe, helpful, friendly, happy and enjoyable environment. They feel valued because everybody cares about them.

The pupils acknowledge that they are 'listened to', their views are valued, and their reasonable suggestions and requests are 'adopted'. This is exemplified in the achievements of the School Council who readily identify the impact of specific improvements made when their peers, parents and staff have taken on board requests they have made. In summary, one of the older members of the Council proudly states, *'everything here is what I want it to be, this is the best school and I would never say anything wrong about it'*. A group of the older pupils is taking a great deal of pride in the work they are undertaking as part of the 'Dream-scheme Project', re-housing the school library in what was formerly the IT suite. They are conscientiously developing their citizenship skills and building their own self-esteem.

Pupils are keen to learn, take a pride in their work and enjoy what they are doing. Their neat and imaginative work can be seen in their RE books and in the attractive displays in their classrooms and around the school. There are good examples of pupils using IT facilities to enhance their work particularly where there is a specific learning need. This is an inclusive school where there are no barriers to learning. In the context of the distinctive identity of the Catholic school, the inclusion of all is a central goal and a shared vision.

From an 'entry' starting point generally below national expectations in RE the attainment of all pupils in RE is at least good and in many cases is outstanding. The Early Years curriculum provides a solid foundation, built upon throughout KS 1, by the end of which 97% of pupils are meeting Level 2 or above with 29% of pupils attaining Level 3. The pupils maintain steady progress throughout KS 2 and the vast majority of them reach a confident Level 4 in the subject with a significant number attaining Level 5 by the end of Year 6. Pupils' progress in RE is outstanding and that of pupils with special educational needs and those from disadvantaged backgrounds particularly so. These figures represent a significant and year on year improvement since the last inspection in 2008.

Pupils are very positive when talking about their RE lessons. They are finding the scheme of work both interesting and challenging. They have frequent opportunities to comment on the topics covered in RE and all pupils have a very good idea of how well they are doing and how they might improve.

Pupils show a high level of respect and consideration for each other and for the adults in the school and wider community. They are very aware of how they can help others who are in need and less fortunate than themselves. Their behaviour is exemplary in all given situations.

The pupils' response to liturgy and worship gives clear indication that they understand the importance of prayer. Pupils are secure and ready to express their own views and beliefs. From the earliest age, they are confident taking part in acts of worship and take some responsibility for the preparation of it through biblical reference and writing their own prayers. From an early age, they act with reverence, pray devoutly, sing joyfully, reflect in silence and join in the liturgy appropriately and with meaning.

Members of staff lead class and school worship through their own example in creative and imaginative ways. Now would seem time for the school to encourage the pupils, particularly the older ones, to assume more responsibility for planning and leading prayer and liturgy particularly in the security of the classroom setting. Evidence would suggest that the pupils are quite capable of doing this and would rise to the challenge given the continued support and guidance from their teachers, all of who are excellent role models.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	1
Taking into account:	
• <i>the quality of pupils' learning and their progress</i>	<i>1</i>
• <i>the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress</i>	<i>1</i>
• <i>pupils' attainment in Religious Education</i>	<i>1</i>
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 provision for Catholic education is outstanding. Teaching extends well beyond the boundaries of the classroom and permeates every moment experienced by the pupils and the adults in the school. The Catholic vision proclaimed by the school is a living reality. The social, moral and spiritual development of the pupils is a significant strength of the school and this is the direct result of the wholehearted dedication and commitment of each member of staff to that mission and vision. All adults are excellent role models and enthusiastically share their own beliefs and values with the pupils in a challenging, supportive and caring way.

The teaching (catechesis) is of a reciprocal and trusting nature where all adults assume responsibility for teaching the children and they are the first to recognise that they themselves have much to learn from the children. The living, sharing and celebrating of the Gospel (evangelisation) fills each school day from one day to the next.

The quality of teaching in RE is consistently good with examples of outstanding practice, ensuring that pupils are motivated and engaged thereby securing effective learning. Where teaching is outstanding, teachers harness their good subject knowledge with a range of teaching strategies to maintain the interest of the pupils throughout the lesson. There are effective cross-curriculum links and the creative use of Information Technology to enhance teaching and learning in RE.

Governors and senior leaders traditionally ensure that the necessary funding for RE is available and this is put to very good use. Planning and assessment materials supporting the RE scheme, *'The Way, the Truth and the Life'*, which the school adopted some six years ago, are used to very good effect. Robust systems for planning, monitoring and assessment are embedded in good practice ensuring that the needs of all pupils are being met. Meticulous tracking records give very clear indication of how well the pupils attain and the progress they make over time in relation to the Attainment Targets in RE. Recent modifications to the data tracking records mean that teachers will be able to report pupils' attainment and progress in RE more effectively to parents through the existing Top Target and Report systems.

A considerable amount of money and time have been spent on world faith materials, on visits by faith leaders and on visits by the pupils to places of worship; all of which has greatly enhanced the pupils' appreciation and understanding of other world religions, traditions and values.

Our Lady and St Brendan's is a prayerful community where Collective Worship is central to the life of the school and a significant strength of it. Prayer opportunities are appropriate to the age and needs of the pupils. A standard planning format, employed throughout the school, ensures continuity and progression. The themes, based upon the liturgical calendar, the RE topic and the integrated SEAL curriculum, reflect a deep understanding of the Church's mission and include the spiritual aspirations of all pupils. Collective Worship could be further enhanced if the older pupils in particular assumed a greater responsibility for preparing and leading their class-based worship.

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	1
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.

1

The school's governors and senior leaders are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education and are outstanding in their effectiveness in every aspect of their role. They readily acknowledge that *'there is something bigger than people'*. The governing body

demonstrates an expertise which meets the school's needs and remains influential in determining the direction of the Catholic life of the school. In particular, the chair of governors together with the nominated governor for RE, enjoy a long-standing relationship with staff, pupils and parents, demonstrating clarity of vision and acting with determination in challenging and supporting the school in tackling areas for development and so bringing about improvements.

The governors operate a highly effective recruitment and selection policy and very effectively oversee the continuing professional development of staff. The governors know intuitively *'who is right'* for their school and ensure that support and guidance is readily available to new members of staff. This is confirmed by the comment, *'we can go to anyone for advice and support....nothing is too much trouble. It is the little things which make the difference'*, and *'I don't know how I could have done my NQT anywhere else'*. The school is now giving serious consideration to the introduction of the excellent programme, *'Catholic Foundation Stones'*, to drive continual professional development. This could also have far-reaching benefits for parents and other members of the local community who might wish to be involved in the programme.

There have been significant changes in the leadership team since the last inspection. The headteacher was appointed to her substantive post in May 2010 following a lengthy period of dedicated service to the school. The headteacher is inspirational, innovative, dynamic and supportive of staff, pupils and parents alike. She is instrumental in leading and promoting a collaborative working environment, wherein morale is very high indeed. All staff feel empowered to promote their strengths to the full and encouraged to develop personally and professionally in a safe and supportive environment. It is said, and indeed clearly evident, that the headteacher is loved by pupils and staff.

The deputy headteacher was appointed to her management post in March 2011 and there is very clear indication that this leadership team provides a seamless support network and a shared drive towards ambitious goals. Governors and senior leaders together give the direction towards, and encourage others to follow, the path to Christ.

Leadership of RE is outstanding and the headteacher and subject co-leader maintain rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating, for challenging and supporting, for ensuring that responsibilities are being met. They have the vision to facilitate the introduction of the RE scheme a number of years before it was nationally promoted. Through in-service opportunities, direct guidance and regular discussion they have ensured that all staff are equipped with the required planning and assessment materials. They have also maintained oversight of RE resources to ensure that these meet the demands of the curriculum. The headteacher and subject co-leader demonstrate their commitment, knowledge and expertise beyond the school into local and diocesan working groups.

Governors and the leadership team share a very clear vision of how the school might improve further, their aims are set out in comprehensive Action plans. Leaders and managers conduct a range of systematic monitoring activities relating to provision and outcomes and their analysis provides a firm basis for accurate diagnosis of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

The school participates fully and actively in developing and implementing a variety of partnership activities. These activities themselves make an excellent contribution to pupils' achievement and well-being. The school actively promotes pupils' initiative in learning about and supporting charities at local, national and global levels and the response is repeatedly generous.

Parents from all backgrounds are actively involved in the life of the school. Parents who feel particularly vulnerable or insecure are afforded confidential support and guidance. Parents speak in glowing terms of the care and dedication of staff and the high level of trust they and their children place in the school. Many parents are former pupils of the school and these familial connections help to sustain the tangible community spirit. There is a community pride, expressed succinctly by one parent, '*St Brendan's is the very best school, just continue doing what you do so very well*'. Parents are very appreciative of the occasions they are invited into the school to celebrate, worship and share the life of the school on occasions such as '*Dads to School*' and '*Mums to School*'.

The pursuit of excellence in Catholic education has led to sustained improvement from one inspection to the next and built on previously good performance. Self-evaluation at every level is founded on sophisticated and accurate analysis. Governors and the senior leadership team inspire the school community to work towards maintaining an ambitious vision. Morale is very high indeed and belief in the school's success runs through all levels of the community. Consequently, the school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

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.	1
How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.	1
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.	1
How effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion.	1