

**INSPECTION REPORT**

Telephone: 0161 817 2204

Email: [education@dioceseofsalford.org.uk](mailto:education@dioceseofsalford.org.uk)

**Inspection carried out Under Canon 806  
and in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

**Name of School**            **St Bernard's RC Primary School, Burnage Ln, Burnage, Manchester M19 1DR**

Inspection date            11<sup>th</sup> December 2018

Reporting Inspectors      Damian Harrison and Jim Graves

Type of school	Primary
URN -	105541
Age range of pupils	3 - 11
Number on roll	307
Appropriate authority -	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	James Walsh
Headteacher	Fiona Maguire
Religious Education Subject Leader	Lisa Thorley
Date of previous inspection	24 <sup>th</sup> October 2013

<b>The Inspection judgements are:</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Explanation of the Grades</b>
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Catholic Leadership	2	
The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)	2	
Religious Education (incorporating Word)	2	
Collective Worship	2	

The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements

## **CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL**

St Bernard's is a larger than average Catholic primary school situated in the Burnage area of south Manchester, serving the parish of St Bernard's. The school has 307 pupils on roll, including those who attend the maintained nursery provision. 74% of the children are baptised Roman Catholic. The ability of the children on entry to the school is generally below that expected for their age. The proportion of the children who are eligible for pupil premium funding is well above average at 44%. The number of the children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities is 10.7% which is broadly average, as is the percentage of children who have English as an additional Language (13.4%). The proportion of the children from minority ethnic backgrounds is increasing and now stands at 36%. Since the last Section 48 Inspection, the school has experienced a large turnover of staff and has a newly formed leadership team. The school is now experiencing much greater stability. 58% of the staff are Catholic and two teachers have the Catholic Teachers' Certificate or equivalent.

## **THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:**

- **Pupils and families feel highly included in this school because it provides an outstanding Catholic welcome to all, leading to a deep sense of belonging, involvement and pride across this strong community.**
- **This is an exceptionally caring school which places the welfare of the pupils and families at the heart of all it does, the impact of which leaves the children feeling safe, valued, happy and able to make good progress in their learning.**
- **This is a rapidly improving Catholic school with a highly effective headteacher who provides a clear vision and direction. She is supported well by her committed leadership team and a governing board who provide good challenge and support.**
- **The children of St Bernard's are well behaved, polite and confident and are a credit to their school and their parents.**

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL is GOOD**

St Bernard's is a good Catholic school which is rapidly improving. It is well led by a strong and effective headteacher who is supported by a hard-working and cohesive leadership team. The staff team are dedicated to the Catholic education of the children. Governors play a key role in supporting and challenging the school and they are proud of its achievements. The children are models of good behaviour and have positive attitudes to their learning. They are keen to do the best they can in everything they do and are eloquent and confident in their views. They are ready to play a more proactive role when exploring global issues and how they can be good stewards of creation. St Bernard's is a highly inclusive community, reaching out to all with an outstanding Catholic welcome. Everyone is proud to feel part of the school family and appreciate the genuine open door approach which is given. One parent quoted 'we are a community, not just a school'. The quality of welfare provided, with the highly nurturing and well-planned pastoral support, is exceptional. Children feel safe and happy knowing they are well cared for and parents have the highest regard for the excellent level of help, guidance and support they receive. Everyone feels valued and respected. The children's Catholic education is good and standards are at least as good as those in English. Pupils make good progress and the staff are ambitious to continue the school's journey of improvement. Religious Education remains at the heart of the school. The children have a good knowledge of Sacred Scripture and are able to apply this to their own lives. The school is keen to allow the children more freedom in their work, to bring greater challenge with more individualised responses. The children enjoy the opportunities they have for prayer and worship. This is well developed across the school and pupils are comfortable and confident. They sing with enthusiasm. They particularly enjoy periods of silence and reflection and are willing to share their personal thoughts and ideas. The school is going to develop this further through greater opportunities for contemplative prayer and to respond to the children's wish to take more responsibility in creating, presenting and developing their own acts of worship and assemblies.

### **THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP is GOOD.**

The headteacher leads this school with strength and purpose. She has formed a cohesive leadership team around her who share her vision. Collectively, they promote the strong Catholic ethos around the school and the good quality of Religious Education the children receive. They share a drive for improvement which is evident in the progress the school has made recently. Systems for self-evaluation are well developed, rigorous and accurate. The leadership team have prioritised the pastoral care, support and guidance of the children and their families and this has led to a real sense of inclusion and belonging which is at the heart of this strong community. St Bernard's genuinely reaches out to the vulnerable and provides an exceptional welcome to all. The children feel safe and well cared for. With this, and the drive and energy of leaders at all levels to keep expectations high, the children make good progress across the board. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school.

Governors know the school well and they are effective in their strategic role. They are proud of the journey the school has been on and they have found a good balance between challenge and support. The parish priests are highly involved in the school, its governance, faith development and the training of staff for the Catholic life of the school, particularly those of non-Catholic backgrounds.

There is much to celebrate at St Bernard's and the school leadership is keen to promote and share this through a review of the school website.

### **THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness) is GOOD.**

St Bernard's provides an outstanding Catholic welcome to everyone in the school. There is a deep sense of community and inclusion, which extends to the parish, with a tangible feeling of pride and belonging. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about their children's education and faith development, including those from different faith backgrounds. One parent stated 'even though we are not Catholic, the school has really helped my children develop in our own faith'. Parents feel that the door is always open for them. New members to the school community talk about the warm welcome they have received and how quickly their children settle in. The school reaches out to all and particularly to vulnerable families. The quality of welfare provided at St Bernard's is outstanding too. This stems from the undoubted passion of the leadership team and staff to ensure that the children's needs are met in full. Weekly inclusion meetings are held to ensure that interventions and support activities are comprehensive and that no child slips under the radar. A holistic approach is adopted, cohesively bringing together the range of services available to the school. This includes Caritas Schools Service who have been piloting the Multi-Family Group programme in partnership with the school. Adults who work in the school are exceptionally caring, and the children say that they feel loved and cared for. The 'Circle of Friends' is a way of helping children overcome difficulties. A new inclusion centre demonstrates the school's drive to ensure that the children arrive at school in a positive way and their mental health and well-being is prioritised.

St Bernard's witnessing community is good, with its mission / vision statement being at the heart of everything. Its links with the parish community are strong and this is highly valued by parents. The school environment reflects God's presence, particularly through displays, with clear reference to Sacred Scripture. For example, 'God's Wonderful World' and 'One Giant Leap for Mankind'. One parent would give the school '11 out of 10', as they feel so happy with the education their child receives. The school provides a distinctive and warm Catholic ethos and climate for the children to *Believe, Grow and Succeed*. They take on a range of ambassadorial roles with confidence and keenness. These include a GIFT / chaplaincy team who make a good contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The children are keen to develop these roles further to extend their understanding of the responsibility they have to contribute to the common good and make our world a better place to live in. The school has plans to explore this through a more comprehensive approach to global issues and the development of a peace curriculum.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word) is GOOD.**

The children are enthusiastic learners in Religious Education and apply themselves to their work, with good attitudes to learning. Consequently, they make good progress at all age ranges. Standards are improving all the time. Religious Education is placed at the heart of the curriculum and the work is varied and of a good standard. The school ensures that 10% of the curriculum is given to the Religious Education and this is reflected fully in the books. Sacred Scripture is used as a central feature of much of the work and the children's knowledge of the Word of God is well developed. They relate the Gospel well to their own lives. There is evidence of the children exploring the 'Big Questions' and philosophical enquiry. The school follows the 'Journey in Love' SRE scheme. The school's mission / vision statement lives at the heart of the school curriculum. Teaching is good throughout and the staff have high expectations for the children. Teachers are increasingly

willing to take risks and adopt innovative and creative approaches. This can be enhanced by allowing the children more freedom and creativity in their individual responses in order to lead to more personalised outcomes. This will help with providing greater challenge, especially for the more able children, clearer differentiation and improved ways of presenting work to give higher levels of ownership and pride. A key strength of the school is spiritual, moral, social and cultural which is evidenced across the curriculum, both in books and in displays / environment. Partnership with the parish is well developed and fully supports the school's evangelising and catechetical role in the broader community.

### **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP is GOOD.**

The children experience prayer and worship at the heart of their school life. They pray with reverence, respect and enjoyment. They sing with enthusiasm and present assemblies with confidence and clarity. Sacred Scripture is frequently used as the stimulus to promote reflection and deeper thinking. The children feel comfortable with all aspects of worship and enjoy this aspect of their daily life at school. They respond positively to the opportunities they have to be still, to meditate, to reflect and to share their own personal thoughts and ideas. This was demonstrated in a moving prayer service with the children in Year 6. Frequent opportunities for prayer are given and the children play a key role in this. The children are keen to be given greater opportunity and freedom to lead and develop their own prayer services, particularly the GIFT / chaplaincy team who are brimming with ideas. The school is also hoping to develop its approach to contemplative prayer and meditation to deepen the experiences of the children and also to explore the benefits of Christian mindfulness as a therapeutic tool. Equally, the school is hoping to provide more opportunity for parents to be involved with prayer activities possibly through the development of prayer stations.

Whole school Masses and class Masses are held regularly and links with the parish are strong.

### **AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- **To ensure that standards are raised in Religious Education, especially to challenge the more able children, by allowing greater opportunity for the children to have increased autonomy in their learning, with more creative and individualised responses to their work.**
- **To broaden the children's experience of prayer and worship by giving them greater opportunity to lead and develop their own acts of worship and to experience a deeper range of contemplative and reflective prayer, and to include parental involvement in this.**
- **To develop further and extend the children's ambassadorial roles by being more proactive citizens in their understanding and responses to global issues, contributing to the common good and benefiting from an enhanced peace curriculum (inner peace, peace in the community and world peace).**
- **To review and improve the school's website in order to broadcast and celebrate the significant achievements of St Bernard's more effectively.**