

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Bernadette's is a growing primary school serving the parishes of St Bernadette and St Michael Whitefield. The number of children on roll has grown considerably since the last inspection from 240 to 312 following an increase in admission number from 30 to 45. There has been some instability in school leadership over the last two years and the current deputy headteacher has been the acting headteacher for the last two terms during the long term absence of the substantive head. The school has had 4 different headteachers since September 2016. The vast majority of children are white British and 97% of learners are baptised Roman Catholic. 9% of the children meet the criteria for pupil premium grant, which is well below the national average. Twenty six children are classed as SEN and 7 children have Education Health and Care plans for varying needs. From September 2018, the school will have maintained nursery provision, replacing the private nursery currently in place. The school is situated very near to the church of St Bernadette and the school parish links are very strong. The parish priest is a regular visitor to school as are many other school governors.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE: (5 max)

- **The collective input of all leaders in the last 12 months to ensure standards in the school are rapidly improving.**
- **The behaviour, attitudes and eloquence of the children who take on many ambassadorial roles within the school thus impacting hugely on the Catholic life of the school.**
- **St Bernadette's is highly inclusive, providing exceptional level of care and support for the children and their families.**

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS GOOD

St Bernadette's is a good Catholic School that is showing signs of rapid improvement. The acting headteacher, very ably supported by the acting leadership team, is ensuring that recent instabilities in leadership are not impacting on the school. The headteacher has continued, since, September 2017, to implement strategies and processes to ensure that standards across the school are at the standard expected for the community of St Bernadette's. Everyone is very supportive of the current leadership structure and the staff, governors, children and carers are a real team devoted to a school that they are all rightly proud of. The children are amazing and their infectious enthusiasm ensure the school's mission is lived out with real purpose and meaning. Their behaviour and attitudes are amazing and they are completely confident in their roles, especially as ambassadors for Jesus as they spread the teachings of scripture and the love of God. They certainly live their faith. The opportunities provided to the children are always at least good, prepared extremely well by the dedicated team of teachers and staff. To improve even further, the able and willing children need more challenge in Word and in leading whole school worship. They have demonstrated they have the skill, attitude and knowledge; they just need the opportunities to shine, which they undoubtedly will.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS GOOD

Over the last two years the school leadership has seen a number of changes and at the time of inspection the new headteacher, appointed from September 2017, is on long term leave and the school is being led by an acting senior leadership team of acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. The relatively inexperienced leadership team have made an outstanding contribution to St Bernadette's, continuing the rapid improvements implemented since September 2017. Standards have risen sharply and many initiatives to enhance teaching and learning have been introduced to ensure children are assessed and tracked appropriately and that children are making the required progress and achieving results that are expected for the school. The acting deputy headteacher has also been the Religious Education subject leader since March 2018 and implemented many new initiatives and routines to rapidly and effectively improve the quality of Religious Education across the school. The current leadership structure has the skills, knowledge and support of the very hardworking staff to ensure that improvements continue to be embedded and their impact will continue to improve the

school even further. To support the school's plans for improvement, they would benefit from a more outward looking approach by increasing the work they do with other schools. The school are supported by a very able and committed governing board who, following an external review, are appropriately skilled and equipped to support the school on its upward journey. Many governors are regular visitors and are well informed and realistic as to the position of the school and what needs to take place to improve further.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness) IS OUTSTANDING

The children are very clearly at the centre of the school's mission and understand fully their role in carrying out the work and message of Jesus, frequently reflecting and asking the question; 'what would Jesus do.' The children take their ambassadorial roles very seriously and are extremely well supported by skilled and committed staff; the Chaplains, School Council and the Mini Vinnies particularly live the mission and as one child told inspectors; *'We feel honoured to be able to help people around the world, we are really proud of it – and it brings us all together as a school.'* The Syrian project is a particular example of how the whole community become involved in social justice and the church's teachings and the school are one of the most proactive supporters of the Rainbows project. The school is fully inclusive and is rightly proud of the care and support it offers all the children and their families. The school have higher than average children with Education, Health and Care Plans and children with specific and complex needs receive support that is above and beyond, both financially and personally. As one grandmother told inspectors, the time given to her grandchild with autism was outstanding and as a result the family felt fully included and had complete trust in the school. The behaviour of the children observed around school, in lessons, assembly and at play was outstanding and a credit to the staff who have high standards and work extremely well together to create a calm, nurturing and happy learning environment. The welcome to school is warm and the majority of parents are happy at the school but a number mentioned that home school communication could be improved.

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word) IS GOOD

The children at St Bernadette's are eager learners and their enthusiasm was seen in all the Religious Education lessons observed that were always at least good. From an early age the children have a very good knowledge of Bible teachings and scripture and are skilled at reflecting on the messages they are exposed to. Children in the Early Years were observed reflecting on the story of the paralysed man using excellent resources to support their learning. Their knowledge of the Bible was outstanding and some could even compare stories as they talked about other miracles and how they could all help in their relationships. These themes continue through school and with such able and knowledgeable children the challenge can now become more embedded and the children can be stretched to their full potential in Religious Education. The children's books show plenty of evidence that at least 10% of the curriculum is devoted to Religious Education. There is generally a good variety of work, reflecting the different opportunities for the children. The work matches the standards observed in the English books, although the challenge in Religious Education was difficult to evidence. Too much of the work was heavily scaffolded by the teachers and an over reliance on worksheets restricts the level of challenge, particularly for the more able children. Detailed plans are in place to support the improvements in Word and progress since Easter has been rapid. These systems need to become embedded before the school can be judged outstanding. The school's Mission Statement is contemporary and reviewed regularly. The children are aware of it and they all embrace the message as they grow together in God's love.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS GOOD

Prayer and worship are at heart of school life at St Bernadette's and the school is very effective in ensuring that all the pupils are included in this. The children pray with reverence and are respectful and thoughtful in the wide range of opportunities they have to pray. The children talk eloquently and with confidence about the central place of prayer in their lives. They approach these with enthusiasm and they are eager to take greater ownership in planning and delivering acts of worship - in particular, to organise and lead the contemplative prayer for the Meditation Club. Assemblies are well planned and carefully thought out. A particular strength of the school is the class-based collective worship, which in many parts of the school is outstanding, providing deeply moving opportunities for the children to explore Sacred Scripture and to share with God how they can make their world a better place to be. Many of these have a focus or object to help the children bring their attention to the theme of the prayer. To incorporate longer periods of stillness, allowing the children to rest for longer in the presence of God, would enhance these even further. The children write their own prayers, and many of these are brightly displayed around

the school. The school has regular Masses and close links with the parish. They talk fondly of the parish priest and the role he plays in their faith development and helping them grow closer to God through the Sacramental Programme. They have prayer partners in the neighbouring school, St Michael's, which is in the same parish.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- **Extend the range of opportunities for the children to prepare and lead their own acts of worship, including meditation club, and to ensure there is an increase in the amount of time devoted to reflection, contemplative prayer and stillness.**
- **To increase the children's independence and autonomy in their work in Religious Education by reducing levels of worksheets and scaffolds, therefore allowing more opportunity for extended and sustained learning.**
- **To provide opportunities for staff and children to visit other settings in order to increase the quality of provision in Word and Worship at St Bernadette's.**