



Inspection carried out Under Canon 804 and 806
and in accordance with Section 48 of the Education
Acts 2005 and 2011

DIOCESE OF SALFORD

Name of School St Bernard's RC Primary School,
Wendover Drive, Ladybridge, Bolton, Lancashire, BL3 4RX
Inspection date Friday 24th January 2020
Reporting Inspectors Mark Mountcastle, Louise Frize, Anne Clinton

Type of school	Primary
URN	105230
Age range of pupils	4-11
Number on roll	203
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Phil Ashcroft
Headteacher	Clare Doodson
Religious Education Subject Leader	Rebecca Spencer
Date of previous inspection	Wednesday 4 th March 2015
Grade of previous inspection	Good

Explanation of the Grades - 1 = Outstanding, 2 = Good, 3=Requires Improvement, 4 = Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of St Bernard's RC Primary School	Overall grade	3
The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)	Grade	2
Religious Education (incorporating Word)	Grade	3
Collective Worship	Grade	3

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Bernard's is a one form entry primary school which serves the Parish of Christ the Redeemer in Bolton. Currently there are 203 pupils on roll from Reception to Year 6; the school does not have Nursery provision. The vast majority of the pupils are white British and 64% of the children are Baptised Catholics. The percentage of children eligible for pupil premium is 11% and the number of children with special educational needs is 13% which is just below the national average. There are 5 children with EHCPs which is slightly above the national average and 9% of the children are classed as having English as a second language. The headteacher and deputy have been in post together for over 10 years. 75% of the teaching staff are Baptised Catholic and 38% hold the CCRS.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

St Bernard's is a very welcoming and caring Catholic Primary school which is fully inclusive. However the school has been judged to be requiring improvement as there needs to be significant developments in Religious Education and Collective Worship. The children, who are very polite and well behaved, can achieve so much more if the staff and leaders at the school plan the curriculum more effectively to ensure the children are given the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills. The children also need to be given the opportunity and resources to lead in the Collective Worship of the school as they are so very willing and capable.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The school is central to a thriving community providing a safe, happy environment for everyone.
- Staff and children enjoy coming to school and positive relationships are embedded throughout.
- Leaders and governors demonstrate a commitment to the church's mission in education, welcoming the whole community with passion and vigour.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- Pupils need to deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills to further develop their religious literacy.
- Staff to undertake relevant CPD and external visits to help their confidence in developing subject knowledge and curriculum planning.
- To give children more opportunities and the tools to enable them to prepare and lead collective worship.
- To ensure staff fully understand and develop confidence in the purpose and variety of ways to pray and worship.

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

The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)	Overall grade	2
Outcomes - The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school		2
Provision - The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school		2
Leadership - How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school		2

The children at St Bernard's are proud of their school and the majority of children are happy, feel safe and can talk confidently and positively about their school experiences and the opportunities they are offered. The behaviour observed around school and in lessons was always very good and there are strong and positive relationships between all the staff and children. Although not yet fully embedded, the children lead well on a

number of initiatives and linked to their work on CARITAS they recently had a ‘hats on for the homeless’ day on the theme of ‘the poor and vulnerable.’ In addition they are involved in a waste project and will use this as a joint theme with a school in Tanzania. The children are very capable and willing and with more training and opportunities will be able to take more of a lead with other Catholic Social Teaching initiatives.

Parents speak very highly of the school and are eager to share how happy their children are and how much they enjoy coming to the school. The school is fully inclusive and parents of children with SEND talk of the love and support offered to them. Communication is very good and the headteacher and all staff are fully accessible and will help families with any issue, however small. The headteacher has a very good knowledge of the families resulting in strong relationships and effective early intervention. The parent’s talk of strong Catholic values and a school that welcomes all, particularly children from other faiths and with special needs.

The headteacher leads by example and warmly and genuinely welcomes all to the school. The pastoral care and support offered to the children and the families is a result of very strong leadership in this area. Leadership is clearly visible around school and in the community. Parents and carers know any issues are dealt with swiftly and with compassion and love. One of the families was particularly grateful to the headteacher who went ‘above and beyond expectations’ to assist their child who was experiencing anxiety. The headteacher is well supported by a governing body who share deeply the headteachers vision of inclusion. The governing body are clear in their roles when monitoring the Catholic life of the school and have recently set up a group that meets monthly with a brief to evaluate this area within the school. They are regular visitors to the school and a strong presence in the community. All the staff and governors worked well together recently to review the schools mission statement and produce a new vision statement for the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word)

Religious Education (incorporating Word)	Overall grade	3
Outcomes - How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education		3
Provision - The Quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education		3
Leadership - How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education		3

The children are very well behaved in lessons and the majority are eager to take part and clearly want to learn. However their progress and enjoyment of Religious Education lessons is hindered by a lack of planning in the curriculum which impacts on the quality and delivery of lessons. The children would also benefit from a much more creative approach to the delivery of activities; some children observed were very passive in their learning journeys but are very clearly more capable. The children asked some searching and deep questions in the ‘big question’ books but opportunities to develop this were not provided. This was also evident in books as children are not given enough opportunity to develop their knowledge of Sacred Scripture and how it can impact on modern life. Too often in the children’s books stories are just retold and real opportunities are missed to develop concepts. Hence the attainment and progress of pupils is limited.

During the course of the inspection four lessons were observed and only one could be judged as good and in the others solid evidence could not be provided that better teaching takes place on a more regular basis. Where the teaching was good the children were confident in using Scripture and could reference the Bible extremely well; however, on other occasions, the children did not acquire new knowledge as the lesson was a repeat of previous learning. The teachers know the children very well and they work hard however they need more quality training to increase their confidence in the Religious Education curriculum and their teaching.

During the last two years three different members of staff have held the responsibility to lead on Religious Education in the school and this has impacted on progression and continuity. The new Religious Education subject leader has made a good start to the role and is experienced in subject leadership. Although new in September, she clearly has the capacity and enthusiasm to drive forward improvements in curriculum Religious

Education. Unfortunately many new initiatives and plans are in their infancy and need development and embedding to ensure the curriculum and opportunities are improved. For example the subject leader and headteacher have monitored lessons and books but only this half term and areas for improvement that have been highlighted have not been actioned within classes. They have not given enough priority to developments and improvements in Religious Education since the previous inspection and as a result the quality of the curriculum has regressed. The governing body are very supportive and willing. However they need to transfer the skills they have acquired when evaluating the Catholic Life of the School to the monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education. They need to provide more challenge to leaders at all levels in this area. All staff and governors would benefit from seeing good and outstanding provision in other settings.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Collective Worship	Overall grade	3
Outcomes - How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship		3
Provision - The quality of Collective Worship provided by the School		2
Leadership - How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship		3

The quality of Collective Worship requires improvement. It is not yet good because staff need to plan appropriate worship opportunities which allow pupils to use a variety of ways of praying. There were several opportunities for the inspectors to observe Collective Worship throughout the day. The Headteacher led a whole school assembly which had some elements of prayer and worship including an enthusiastically sung hymn and some silent reflection time. Children from the Y5 GIFT team came forward to take part in the assembly by reading a prayer and Y6 described a picture for the school to identify. In those classes which were observed, there were some examples of liturgical music being used to support times of silence and reflection but a wider variety of ways of praying needs to be explored. There was little evidence to demonstrate that acts of worship were prepared or led by the children. Where children were involved, it was to read small extracts of pre-prepared 'scripts'. Planning for Collective Worship has only been in place since the beginning of the Spring term. Therefore its impact has been limited. This is an area which the subject leader and GIFT leader identified as an area for development.

Staff and children pray together at key moments throughout the day. However the depth and quality of this provision is limited as the school is in the early stages of developing a comprehensive and effective menu for Collective Worship. Each classroom has a dedicated prayer area which reflects the current theme chosen for Collective Worship. Since January, these themes have reflected the liturgical year. The children are able to speak confidently about the GIFT team's role in the prayer life of the school. Members of the team take turns to write prayers with pupils throughout Key Stage 2 at lunchtime. These prayers are then read out in assembly the following week and stored in a prayer box in the Headteacher's office. Following recent training at the diocese, the children are enthusiastic about extending their role in developing prayer and are excited to explore this further with help from the new GIFT team leader.

The planning and leading of Collective Worship requires school leaders to re-evaluate and revise the practice in individual year groups. Staff need to understand the purpose and variety of Collective Worship which can be used to enthuse and energise the children. The sessions observed were not opportunities for children to engage in meaningful prayer or reflection but were extensions of Religious Education lessons which were teacher-led and held little opportunity for spiritual development or pupil voice. The children need more opportunities to design their prayer and worship sessions. School leaders recognise that they need to support and encourage pupil leadership. High quality CPD is needed so that staff can support the children as they plan, deliver and evaluate Collective Worship as the staff are willing and eager to do things to the best of their ability.