

## INSPECTION REPORT

**St. Bernard's R.C. Primary School,**  
**Burnage Lane**  
**Manchester**

Inspection date 24<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
 Reporting Inspectors Mr. A.J. Sowerby Lead Inspector  
 Mr D. Burns Additional Inspector

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Roman Catholic Primary
URN	105546
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	344
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mr James Walsh
Headteacher	Mr P Gallagher
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Miss M. Teehan
Date of previous inspection	May 2007

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades  1 = Outstanding  2 = Good  3=Requires Improvement  4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
The quality of the Word of God community	1	
The quality of the Welcome community	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	1	
The quality of Witness	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

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

St Bernard's Primary School is a larger than average sized primary school with a nursery in Burnage, Manchester. It is situated in an urban area of mainly social housing with some privately owned accommodation. There are currently 344 children on roll, including 45 in the nursery class. 289 pupils are baptised Catholics. The indicative admission number is 45. The pupils who are aged 3-11 years are arranged in a mixture of single age and mixed age classes. Most pupils (70%) are from White British backgrounds, with 30% from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is largely in line with national average. There are currently 15% EAL children in school. This has doubled since 2009 and is just below the national average of 18%. 33% of children are entitled to Free School Meals which is well above the proportion nationally. The proportion of pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs is broadly in line with national average. The needs of these learners range from moderate learning difficulties, to emotional and behavioural difficulties. Currently there are 6 children with a Statement of Special Educational Need who receive individual one to one support. The school has gained the Arts Mark Silver, National Healthy School Status, Active Schools Award, International Schools Award and a curriculum award for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The parish priest is a regular and valued visitor to the school and provides support to all groups within the school. There are 15 members of the teaching staff of whom 75% are Catholic and 4 hold the CTC. Level of attendance is high at 96% in 2013 and has been consistent for many years. No pupils have been excluded in the last 7 years.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Bernard's is an outstanding Catholic Primary school. There is a genuinely warm and friendly welcome given to all. All children are offered a Catholic education in a caring and supportive environment where differences are welcomed and celebrated. The Word of God is central to the life of the school. The school works collaboratively with the parish priest and is firmly at the heart of the parish. This ensures the pastoral and spiritual needs of the learners and their families are very well met. The dedicated Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher have high expectations of adults and children. Together with the hard working staff they have created an ethos where everyone recognises the need to work together as a "family", showing love and concern for all its members. This work is further enhanced by the support of an effective Governing Body. The children love coming to school and the school council, mediators, chaplains and "Disciples for Jesus" groups all expressed how very proud they are of all the opportunities given to them. Pupils are friendly, polite and welcoming and their behaviour at all times is exemplary. They work hard to fulfil the high expectations of the adults who work with them. They enjoyed every opportunity to share with the inspectors their work. The staff and pupils demonstrate a very high level of respect, care and service to others. The outstanding teaching and learning; the creative and imaginative use of the learning environment; as well as the high quality interactive displays which supports the children's faith journey; ensure that all children receive a vibrant Catholic Education. This is also enhanced by the many engaging Acts of Collective Worship that the inspection team observed.

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

- Outstanding teaching and learning
- The wide variety of the learning experiences provided for the children
- The high quality interactive displays
- That all children participate in acts of worship which develop fully their prayer life as evidenced in the work of the School Mission Week, The Sacred Space, The Outdoor Prayer area, 7<sup>th</sup> Day Room and Sensory Garden

## **THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP is Outstanding**

The quality of Catholic leadership is outstanding. There is strong leadership at all levels of the school community which contributes significantly to the outstanding provision for Catholic Education that the school currently provides. The school's R.E. Leadership Team jointly led by the Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher provide an extremely clear vision for the school. They provide outstanding role models for the whole school community and as a result the development of the Catholic life of the school is at the forefront of the school's work. They are supported by a knowledgeable Governing Body, and the parish priest who is a

regular visitor to the school. The school has a clear plan for developing R.E across the school and this is reflected in the priority it is given. Evidence for this can be found in the school's clear self-evaluation plan, which is based on the Review Evaluation and celebration framework. The school is aware of its next steps and has clear plans for implementing them. As a result the inspectors can verify that this evaluation is both accurate and reflective.

**THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD is outstanding because:**

The school's recently revised Mission Statement is clearly displayed throughout the school. It is known, lived and witnessed to and is evident at every level of the school. The children have recently been involved in illustrating it and a copy of this is displayed clearly in the front entrance of the school. The engagement of two retired head teachers has enhanced the quality of the children's work in relation to this. All school policies and procedures have a significant impact on learning and the life of the school and develop in the children a great sense of pride and belonging in the whole Catholic family of St Bernard's. The Religious Education of the pupils is at the centre of the Core Curriculum. The staffing and resources devoted to RE are of the highest standard, reflecting its significance and importance in the school. Teaching is consistently good across the school with many examples of outstanding practice. Pupils are challenged to engage with the Big Questions of the purpose and meaning of life throughout the curriculum. This could be seen particularly in those lessons where children were challenged to implement the gospel message in their own lives. Examples of this were seen in Year 4 where children were asked to reflect upon how to keep their baptismal promises, in Year 6 where they were asked to think about what it means to be a good steward of creation and in the Foundation Stage where the children were encouraged to make the most of the gifts God gives us. Further examples of this work included children in Key stage 2 being inspired to pray the rosary at lunch time following the provision of a moving and inspirational assembly on the theme of Lourdes. Here the school makes good links with the students from the local Catholic 6<sup>th</sup> Form College. Scripture is clearly known, understood and made relevant throughout the school. The staff and pupils demonstrate and can articulate the centrality and importance of the Word of God. There is evidence on the displays in the classroom and halls of the importance of this. The home, school and parish links are inclusive, creative and effective. Pupils are actively trained in outreach to the local community. This can be seen in the vast number of charities that the school supports. These are not just the Catholic charities such as CAFOD and St Joseph's Penny but also the support the school gives to other local charities such as World Cancer research, The Royal British Legion, Charisma Crisis, The Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage/Med Equip and the NSPPCC and many others.

The Inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgements:

- Overall the standards of attainment, progress and hence achievement are outstanding. As the curriculum is based on the mission it is challenging, interesting and fulfilling. The children are developing the age appropriate knowledge and skills. The school has incorporated "The Way, The Truth and the Life" scheme. This is well supplemented by other R.E. resources so that as a result standards of learning are outstanding.
- Work in R.E is clearly as excellent as work in other subjects due to the high priority given to it in school. This was seen by inspectors during the scrutiny of both the R.E and Literacy books. Marking was consistently good in R.E. The school has begun to develop a clear and coherent system for tracking the children's attainment in R.E. but it is not yet fully embedded in the school something which the school recognises.
- Standards in RE are excellent. The children are encouraged to take the initiative and lead their own learning thereby developing their independence. This is evident in all classes. There are regular visits into and out of school to enrich the RE curriculum such as participating in joint Diocesan and parish masses.
- The school has worked collaboratively to gather evidence so that the school has a clear strategy that includes all members of the school community in implementing the 5Ws across the school.

**THE QUALITY OF WELCOME is Outstanding because:**

St Bernard's is a school where everyone feels welcome. The school's Mission Statement and School Prayer at the entrance to the school highlights the importance the school places on making sure that all members of

the school community are part of God's family. Parents were keen to express their views by saying "You get a real welcome with a staff member on the gate every morning" whilst another commented that "the staff treat every child as being special and that they treat them as they would their own" The importance of the dignity of the individual is clearly evident at all levels. This could be seen in the way that all pupils and staff treated children with autism and special educational needs in a respectful and caring manner so that their self-esteem was raised and their needs met. The appointment of a Parental Support worker has helped to ensure that this wonderfully warm sense of welcome is also provided for all parents. The quality of the outreach support provided by the school has enabled it to improve its levels of attendance so that they are now above the national average. All members of the school community demonstrate a very high level of belonging and ownership of the school. Pupils are given a high level of responsibility in creating and sustaining the schools sense of welcome. The "Disciples of Jesus" project and the provision to children of school jumpers with the words "Follow my example" on the back has also helped with the promotion of this. Parents are very welcome into school and are encouraged to engage in their child's learning. This could clearly be seen in the way that staff from the nursery and reception classes met parents at the start of the school day and discussed with them any concerns that they had.

The inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgements:

- All families are welcomed into the school with warmth by the opportunities which are created to visit the school and meet the whole team. Parents voiced to the inspector how the staff went out of their way to make them feel part of the community of St. Bernard's through the organisation of a variety of different social and fund raising activities.
- Parents are kept informed and up to date about the curriculum and events in school through the use of the school newsletter and school website. The school also ensures that the voice of the children is heard and respected. The School Council were keen to express their opinion about the changes they had brought about in school such as the provision of improved play facilities and the development of a Sacred Space area for reflective prayer.
- Within school relationships are of the highest quality. Older children care for the younger ones, pupil chaplains and mediators work to ensure playtimes are fun and peaceful. During the course of the inspection the children's behaviour was outstanding.

**THE QUALITY OF WELFARE is Outstanding because:**

The staff and pupils demonstrate a very high level of respect, care and service to others. This was witnessed in all classes where children feel confident and secure enough to tend to their personal needs without interrupting the learning or having their dignity abused. The structures and procedures ensure that all pupils and staff feel safe and are treated with respect and dignity. This was evidenced in the way that members of staff cared for children who were hurt or unwell. The outreach support provided by the school ensures that the needs of parents and young families are met in a structured and sensitive manner. All pupils and staff feel safe and free to express their opinions and know that these will be valued. This was seen during discussions with the children who expressed their opinions about the variety of opportunities provided for them and how they felt empowered to express their opinions at either school or class council meetings. Importance and recognition is given equally to all. The budget, staffing and resourcing decisions demonstrate a consistent commitment to Catholic stewardship throughout the school.

The Inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgements:

- The physical, spiritual and mental well-being of each person is central to the school's mission. The school council discussed with the inspectors the need to reach out with kindness to others for example those less fortunate in the world. Children are caring and have a true sense of right and wrong.
- The school is a very caring community where everyone is valued! Children during lessons listened respectfully to other pupils' ideas. The 'Disciples of Jesus' group and those children who wear the "Follow my example" jumpers model good behaviour at break times whilst trained child mediators are available to

address any difficulties as soon as they arise. This has ensured that outstanding behaviour occurs across the school and the welfare of children is very well catered for.

- Calm support is offered by sensitive adults when children have difficulty remaining on task. Such role models ensure learning and good relationships develop. This could be seen in the way that children with special educational needs and disabilities were managed within the classroom so that a purposeful learning environment was encountered.
- The school stresses the importance of reaching out beyond its own community so that children feel part of God's world. The charity work is a living example of this as children support CAFOD, St Joseph's Penny and many other charities chosen by the children.
- The school goes to great lengths to ensure as far as possible children are free from worry and a happy, calm atmosphere is the norm. The provision of regular child meditation sessions supports this by providing children with the opportunity for a short period of silence in a busy bustling school.

#### **THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP is Outstanding because:**

The school provides a variety of worship opportunities for pupils throughout the school (prayer, reflection, liturgies) including small and large groups – which are appropriate to their backgrounds and faith experiences. All children are encouraged to participate in voluntary acts of worship which are appropriate to the Liturgical Year for example the children in both Key Stage 1 and 2 pray the rosary together during the month of October. The inclusive and reflective Collective Acts of Worship help pupils to grow in confidence in prayer and develop a relationship with God. This could be seen in the both the assemblies and the meditation session where all the children were provided with the opportunity to reflect quietly upon the meaning of the gospel message. The provision of a School Mission during the last summer term, and the development of a Sacred Space for personal prayer showed the whole school's commitment to the Catholic Life of the School. The school has strong links with the parish of St. Bernard's where they participate in a variety of masses and other liturgical celebrations. An example of this being the class masses which are attended by both the children and parents.

The inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgements:

- The parish priest regularly celebrates Mass which the children attend in church. The school shares the celebration of mass with the parish. Key events are celebrated with special masses: the beginning of each school year, the parish and school feast day, Holy Days and at the end of the year.
- There are strong links between the parish and the school particular with regard to the preparation of the children for the Sacraments of Initiation.
- During Advent, Lent and the Easter season the school holds assemblies, liturgies and times of reflection/ reconciliation that are all shared by the whole school community. The children are encouraged to voluntarily say the rosary during the month of October and May and the Stations of the Cross during Lent.
- There is a daily act of collective worship. These take place in a variety of formats but also are linked clearly to the Liturgical Year. Children pray in classes, small groups and individually with great reverence, respect and thought.
- Pupils are comfortable with their feelings and have a good and knowledgeable vocabulary. Each class has a special area of focus. The children know many school prayers and compose powerful prayers for themselves. In many classes there were examples of displays of the children's own prayers.
- Attractive displays which were seen around school are used to show and stimulate prayer opportunities. Hymns, music and singing enhanced the quality and enjoyment of prayer in school.
- The Gospel values are clearly evidenced throughout all the policies and procedures and have a significant impact on learning and the life of the school.

#### **THE QUALITY OF WITNESS is Outstanding because:**

All staff act as excellent role models for the children and help them in recognising that God is with them in every aspect of school life. Adults and pupils witness to the Mission Statement of the school, which informs everything and is explicit in policies and the lived experience of the whole community. Adults act as role models of the school's mission and values and as key promoters of the ethos of the school for the pupils and the school community's witness to the wider community. The staff and pupils feel confident and secure in

their witness to Christ, the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. Pupils are confident in witnessing to the beliefs and values of a Catholic community and are actively encouraged and supported in being pro-active citizens who participate in the decision-making processes at a local and national level. This is seen in the way the school promotes support for various charities so as to promote support for the Common Good. An explicit Catholic culture permeates the whole of school and is clearly identifiable through relationships, decision-making and actions.

The Inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm his judgement:

- The entire school community recognises that God is at the heart of the school in their actions and their relationships. All live the word of God. The mission statement is the powerful tool which is used to demonstrate how the school bears witness to a loving God. All members of the school family meet God each day and strive to meet all the challenges involved in this witness.
- The school mission is known and understood by all at appropriate levels. Relationships are outstanding at St Bernard's and a strong sense of teamwork and belonging exist.
- The children have a highly defined sense of fairness and justice. They know their responsibilities in terms of equal opportunities, stewardship and reconciliation.
- The inspectors noted at all times behaviour was outstanding. Children are respectful of each other. Adults working as a committed team have high expectations of the children and in this atmosphere the children thrive.

#### **AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

1. To continue to develop Assessment for Learning in R.E. across the school
2. To share the school's good practice in Pupil Led chaplaincy and Acts of Collective Worship with other schools across the Diocese.

25<sup>th</sup> October 2013

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making our visit to St Bernard's so enjoyable when we came to inspect your school for the Bishop. We really enjoyed being with you. Thank you for looking after us so well and helping us to feel very welcome. St Bernard's is an outstanding school.

We enjoyed being part of your lessons and were sorry not to see everyone. Thank you for showing us so much of your work and activities. We could see that you are very proud of your school and all that you have achieved together. We were particularly impressed that you thought that the most important part of your learning and life together was that you *'felt connected to one another as all part of God's family'*. We know the Bishop will be delighted to hear this.

Your teachers are really helping you to learn very well and we were very impressed by your excellent relationships and behaviour. It was good to see so much of your Mission Statement coming through everything you are learning; your relationships and the special way you make everyone feel valued. It is wonderful to see a school made up of pupils and adults who get on so well together so that everyone is cared for as a member of God's family. This is a true reflection of being part of a Catholic community where everyone is welcome and has a place.

You have started using your new RE programme and are doing well. You are a very creative school and we were most impressed by the way you work together so co-operatively in your lessons. The prayer services we saw were very good and uplifting experiences. Your teachers have started to develop an excellent way of assessing your knowledge of R.E. and we have asked them to continue to develop this with you. Many of you have a very good knowledge and understanding of your faith so you should be able to help the staff in moving your school forward by developing assessment systems which highlight the higher levels of skills and attitudes you show as outstanding students.

God bless you all and have a really happy term.

Yours sincerely

Mr A.J Sowerby  
Mr D. Burns

(Section 48 Inspectors)

## **Summary Report to Parents**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2013 the school was inspected in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The full report has been made available to the school and can also be accessed via both the school website and the Education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

### **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

St John's is an outstanding Catholic Primary school. There is a genuinely warm and caring welcome given to all. All children are offered a Catholic education in a friendly and supportive environment. The word of God is central to the life of the school. There are outstanding parish links. St. John's works collaboratively with the parish priest and the school is firmly at the heart of the parish. This ensures the pastoral and spiritual needs of the learners and their families are well met. The newly appointed head teacher and her staff have high expectations of adults and children. All the staff have created an ethos where everyone recognises the need to work together as a "family", showing love and concern for all its members. The children enjoy coming to school and the school council expressed how very proud they are of all the opportunities given to them. Pupils are friendly, polite and welcoming and their behaviour at all times is exemplary. They work hard to achieve the high expectations of the adults who work with them. They enjoyed every opportunity to share with the inspectors their work. The staff and pupils demonstrate a very high level of respect, care and service to others. The quality of teaching is a notable strength of the school."

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

- The high quality of teaching and learning
- The quality of relationships between all members of the school community
- The support given to the school by parents and the parish priest
- The quality of care and guidance provided to the children
- The exemplary behaviour of the children

### **AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

- To continue to develop and embed the school assessment and tracking system for R.E in order to demonstrate that levels of attainment in R.E. are in line with other core subjects.
- To continue with the building development programme so that all areas of the school environment meet the high standard created in those areas already improved so as to maximise teaching and learning opportunities for all children.