

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

School: St. Bernard's Catholic High School

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School URN: 112400

Headteacher: Mrs Mary Ann Page

Chair of Governors: Mr Graham Hackett

Inspectors: Mr Anthony Finnerty
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Date of Inspection: 25th and 26th November 2011

The inspection report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Michael Campbell O.S.A., the Bishop of Lancaster (c.f. Code Canon Law, 804, 806), and for the Governing Body of the school (Education Act 2005, Section 48). The inspection reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school's witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

The inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Bernard's is a large Catholic High School for students aged 11-16. It has specialist science status and a second specialism as a training school under the High Performing Specialist Schools programme. It serves Furness and the surrounding area. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are a few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disability is below average overall, although the proportion with a statement of special needs is above average. The school has been part of the reorganisation of Barrow secondary provision and as a result the admission number has increased from 175 to 200. The school is now taking an increasing proportion of children from non-Catholic primary schools in the Barrow area.

A new head teacher took up post in September 2011.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll:	920
Planned Admission Number of Pupils:	200
Percentage of pupils baptised RC:	47.5%
Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations:	27.6%
Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths:	01.8%
Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation:	23.0%
Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups:	05.1%
Percentage of pupils with special needs:	03.8%

Staffing

Full time teachers:	53
Part time teachers:	4
Percentage of Catholic teachers:	24.5%

RE Department Staffing:

Number of full time RE teachers:	4
Number of part time RE teachers:	0
Percentage of Catholic teachers:	100%
Percentage of teachers with CCRS:	%

Percentage of learning time given to RE:

Yr7	8%	Yr 10	10%
Yr8	8%	Yr 11	10%
Yr9	8%		

Parishes served by the school:

Holy Family, Barrow	140
St. Mary/Sacred Heart, Barrow	136
St. Columba, Barrow	136
St. Pius X, Barrow	140
Our Lady of the Rosary, Dalton	10
St. Mary, Ulverston	14
St. James, Millom	4

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic education

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

MAIN FINDINGS

St Bernard's is a good Catholic school with many outstanding features. Students genuinely enjoy their time there and, along with the staff, governors and parents are proud of their school. All members of the community feel valued and feel that they belong to a caring Catholic community, which, as one student said, "has a real family feel". There is an air of spaciousness in the buildings, and a correspondingly open spirit in the community. The religious dimension is interwoven into all aspects of the school's life and a calm, welcoming atmosphere is evident throughout the school. Pastoral care is a significant strength of the St Bernard's which benefits greatly from the work of the chaplain and of the inclusion team. The hard working and committed teachers genuinely care for their pupils and want them to do their best.

All students display a real enjoyment of Religious Education and make good progress in lessons. Key Stage 3 results are consistently good year on year. GCSE results over the three year trend are good for the large majority of students. Achievement for both more able students and lower ability students is particularly good. Most recent Raise On-line data (2010) shows the relative performance indicator for Religious Education as significantly positive.

Leaders and managers at all levels provide purposeful leadership and direction and are totally committed to the school as a community deeply rooted in Catholic Christianity. The governors are active in supporting the Catholic life of the school and in particular the RE Department. The head of department provides strong leadership to her team and is an excellent role model in the commitment she shows to staff and students. The Whole School Development Plan declares a realistic determination to manage the dramatic growth of the school – that is, growth in numbers and in buildings – so that the values and ethos of St Bernard's are not diminished. The strong Religious Education team, and the energy and determination of senior leaders, confirm that St Bernard's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

Overall provision for Catholic education is outstanding at St Bernard's. The RE Department has four specialist teachers, it is well resourced and is based in a suite of rooms dedicated to religious education. Assessment practices and procedures are well documented and implemented in line with whole school policy. There is good provision for Collective Worship strongly supported by a full time chaplaincy co-ordinator.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Develop further opportunities for pupils to increase their experience and skills in planning and delivering assemblies and daily prayer by sharing the expertise of the chaplain, year heads and form tutors.
- The head teacher and other senior leaders need to ensure a more formal system for monitoring the quality of Collective Worship.
- In order to further raise the aspirations of pupils and to widen their cultural awareness the school should provide opportunities to visit places of religious significance to both Christianity and other world faiths
- Ensure that all documentation related to the Catholic life of the school is consistently high in line with other school documentation to accurately reflect the effective policies and the good practice present in the school
- In order to further develop the religious education curriculum the school should seek to fulfil the demands of the Bishops' Conference with respect to time allocated to the subject.

PUPILS

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

1

Pupil progress, attainment and the quality of learning in RE are outstanding at both key stages. Students are keen to succeed and improve. Pupils say lessons are enjoyable and positive relationships ensure behaviour is good. Pupils at KS4 have achieved well over the last three years reflecting whole school trends. The results in 2009 showed 68% of pupils achieving A* - C which increased to 76% in 2011 while the year 10 cohort achieved 79% in their module in 2011. More able students are well catered for as A* and A grades have improved over the three years with 33% of pupils attaining these grades in 2011.

Pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities are strongly supported which leads to positive outcomes. 31% achieved A*-C in 2010 comparing favourably with other subjects while 45% achieved this in 2011. This support develops self-esteem, improves progress and leads to achievement that is good at each key stage. Those on free school meals (FSM) taking RE GCSE have reached their targets in most cases and in 2011 achieved 65% A* - C outperforming other departments. At KS3 students make significant strides, generally making two levels of progress over that key stage. Pupils from all groups gain good knowledge and understanding of Catholic teaching.

At St Bernard's all pupils recognise that they are members of a community. Pupils feel themselves to be known and valued and cared for. They feel safe and happy. They readily participate in all areas of school life. Most pupils can express themselves with confidence; they know that their views and opinions will be treated with respect. They are aware of the core values and teachings of Christianity and support Catholic practices and worship. They help prepare

Masses and assemblies and support a chapel choir. Care and concern for each other is shown in both formal and informal ways ranging from the "buddy" system to peer mentoring, and the good behaviour prevalent in the school reflects these positive values.

Pupils are keen to participate in charity events and in service to the wider community. They undertake a variety of activities to assist those in need at home and abroad including hamper and shoe-box projects and organising a concert for injured soldiers. Pupils recognise the importance of religion and spirituality and many students make use of the services provided by the chaplaincy. Visits from individual speakers and the "Ten Ten Theatre" have inspired and challenged students. The pervasive ethos of the school encourages self-respect, pride in belonging, and an approach to education which embraces the whole person

The participation of pupils in Collective Worship is good. Daily opportunities for reflection and prayer are scheduled throughout the school. The quality of pupil experience varies according to the skills and focus of whoever leads the act of worship, and there is currently no consistent method of seeking students' responses and reflections. Although it is too often "done to" rather than "done by" the young people, the inclusive character of Collective Worship nurtures the common spirit which can be felt throughout the school. Although there are some pupils who are strongly involved in the work of the chaplaincy, at present many pupils tend to be passive recipients. Pupils express a desire for this area of school life to evolve further.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school

2

Leaders and managers demonstrate commitment to the educational mission of the Church by ensuring a broad and balanced curriculum and encouraging positive relationships. This mission is unequivocal and explicit. From strategy documents to wall hangings to in-service training and routine conversations, the school leaders ensure that staff and students know the identity, purpose and ethos of St Bernard's and recognise the demands that makes upon them. All staff and students feel valued members of the community, contributing to the life of the school.

Leaders and managers at all levels have increasingly robust monitoring and tracking procedures in place. The whole school policy enables the department to make timely interventions. The head of RE is a reflective practitioner who is keen to celebrate strengths and to identify areas for development in the provision of religious education. Departmental work scrutiny and lesson observations indicate that departmental procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are embedded and effective.

The governors make a strong contribution to the Catholic dimension of the school. Each member of the governing body is attached to a curriculum department and maintains a relationship with that department. Some governors

attend liturgies and in-service training, they see themselves as part of the school community. They have a good knowledge of and a concern for the Catholic life of the school. They have a particularly good understanding of the work of the RE Department.

The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting Catholic learning and well-being is good. Links with feeder primary schools have been developed. Parents are positive and supportive. Links with local parishes are encouraged through Christmas parcels for elderly and vulnerable families. Caring for the disadvantaged and needy is also underlined by support for charities under the umbrella of 'Bernaid' and through activities such as carol singing in old people's homes. The school has regular contact with Castlerigg Manor and offers year 10 pupils an annual retreat opportunity.

The contribution of leaders and managers towards promoting community cohesion is good. Cohesion is fostered in the school community through assemblies, pastoral days and cross-curricular activities such as Green Days. In addition pupils are encouraged to share their views and listen to staff through the student council. The school raises money for 'Bernaid' and pupils support local and global causes including cancer and Romanian charities. The particular demographic of the area means that the school is predominantly white British and the pupils have little contact with adherents to world faiths other than Christianity. The RE, History, Geography and Citizenship curriculum fosters respect for all faiths, valuing of diversity, mutual understanding and shared values. An ecological project has been supported by selling recycled bags and adopting 'Green' policies.

Pupils have taken part in the local community through participation in the Barrow Youth Council, and through a social enterprise activity called the Giving Nation Challenge. Increasingly strong links with primary schools also enhance community cohesion.

PROVISION

How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education

1

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is always good and sometimes outstanding. All observed lessons showed very strong planning, were well resourced, and engaged the vast majority of pupils. Provision was made in each lesson for the full breadth of ability and ingenious strategies were employed to ensure that all students were involved in meaningful learning almost all of the time. Behaviour for learning is extremely well managed throughout the school. All members of the RE department are exemplary in their sensitive but firm handling of student behaviour. Progress in lessons is good and the students were clearly able to articulate the level at which they were currently working in Religious Education and their key stage target. Excellent use is made of ICT resources in order to stimulate student responses.

The department has embraced the Levels of Attainment at Key Stage 3 and is employing these with increasing expertise. In line with whole school policy the department is tracking pupil progress very effectively. This serves to motivate

students and to allow the department to quickly identify underachievement, which is addressed quickly and effectively. Classroom displays are a vehicle for education and never simply decoration. The department makes excellent use of Assessment for Learning strategies including peer and self-assessment.

Religious Education at St Bernard's is a justifiably popular subject. "It's fun!" was a phrase used to describe RE on many occasions. When pressed it was clear that pupils found lessons engaging and valuable, that they learnt about religion and from religion in a way which is appealing and authentic. Students were almost unanimous in their praise, citing particularly the opportunities it gave them to explore their own faith and respond to moral issues. They valued the respect they are shown and the permission they have from all departmental staff to express their own opinion without fear. Staff express the desire to cultivate in the students "an inner strength to see them through life." Because of the quality of delivery, the RE curriculum meets the needs of students. It is differentiated to accommodate particular students. Although the demands of the bishops' conference in terms of time allocation for religious education are not currently being met, the school provides an excellent service to young people in their religious education.

The quality of Collective Worship is good. There is a range of formal and informal opportunities for daily prayer. This well-structured pattern for prayer is positively regarded and ensures that the community reminds itself each day of the school's values. Assemblies, registration, form and whole school Masses and community liturgy make a significant contribution to defining the Catholic ethos of the school and in making the message of the Gospel relevant to all the community. Collective Worship is generally well prepared and is given high prominence in the weekly and annual school calendar. Prayer is central to school life. It is a key part of every gathering and celebration and is well supported by the popular school chaplain. Staff and students are made to feel welcome and speak warmly of the inclusive nature of whole school liturgies.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1 **Outstanding** Grade 2 **Good** Grade 3 **Satisfactory** Grade 4 **Unsatisfactory**

Overall effectiveness	2
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	1
How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups	1
• how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	1
❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
❖ pupils' attainment in RE	1
• the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school	2
• how well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	2
How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School	2
• how well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
• how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for RE and plan for 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 that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met	2
• how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well being	2
• how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion.	2
How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education	1
• the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	1
• the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education	1
• the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	1
• the quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2