



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## INSPECTION REPORT

### ST BERNADETTE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL WOMBOURNE

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Inspection dates 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> June 2011  
Reporting Inspector Brenda Beale

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Primary
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Ms Marese O'Dwyer
School address	Lindale Drive Wombourne Staffordshire WV5 8DZ
Telephone number	01902 894787
E-mail address	headteacher@stbernadettes.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	March 2008
DCSF School Number	860/3481
Unique Reference Number	124372

**Headteacher** Mr Michael Brown

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector. The inspector visited three full religious education (RE) lessons to observe teaching and learning, pupils' behaviour, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, including an assembly and looked at a range of evidence, including key documentation such as the school's development plan, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in RE, and pupils' work.

## Information about the school

St Bernadette's is a small Catholic primary school in the parish of St Bernadette, Wombourne. Most children live in the village of Wombourne, which has a broad range of housing and socio-economic conditions. Pupil numbers have risen from 49 at the time of the last inspection to 67. The number of Catholics on roll is 24 (37%). The headteacher currently has a full-time teaching commitment but an additional teacher has been recruited and will take up post in September. The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of children with special educational needs/and or disabilities is above the national average, but very few have a statement of additional needs.

## Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

The Catholic life of this school is good with some outstanding features. Despite the very exacting circumstances of a headteacher in a full-time teaching commitment, growing demand for places for vulnerable children, and a determination to raise standards in the core subjects, the Catholic life of the school has been enhanced. The parish of St Bernadette has been linked with the much larger St Michael's parish in Wolverhampton since April 2010. This means that the parish priest has responsibility for leading two parishes and caring for two primary schools. Pupils who started in the reception year have reached, by the end of Key Stage 2, very impressive levels of knowledge and understanding in their RE. The most able are challenged appropriately and respond with maturity. A higher than average proportion of children with special educational needs has led to lower attainment in national examination results, but the progress and achievement of these pupils are good. The headteacher and the governing body have worked successfully to ensure that the spiritual and moral development of the children and their religious education have remained their highest priority. As a result outcomes for pupils, in terms of the Catholic life of the school, are good with some aspects being outstanding. The headteacher, his staff and the governors have an ambitious vision for the Catholic life of the school and are united and committed to their task. The children's behaviour is excellent and they are supportive of each other and particularly protective of those pupils with disabilities or special educational needs. They are keen learners and willingly take on responsibilities in the school. Pupils participate enthusiastically in collective worship displaying reverence and respect. All pupils know the three words which sum up the school's mission statement, 'Achieve, Believe, Care.' Even the youngest children are familiar with and understand the *Golden Rule*, 'Treat others as you would wish to be treated'.

Many pupils enter school with little or no knowledge of the Catholic faith or God and due to good progress reach standards that are in line with national averages and in some cases better. Excellent behaviour, good teaching of RE lessons, quality prayer and worship ensure that the pupils' progress and knowledge and understanding of the faith are very good. Work found in books is plentiful and demonstrates that attainment is good overall though some pieces of extended writing are satisfactory and in line with literacy standards. Pupils can talk about the scriptures and the Catholic faith knowledgeably and with confidence.

The school has addressed many of the issues raised at the time of the last inspection. Standards of teaching and learning in RE have been raised by developing planning, monitoring and assessment. Assessment procedures need to be further developed and designed to inform future planning more fully. The RE curriculum has been broadened and now it includes family life and sex education and learning about other faiths and cultures. The role of governors in strategic planning for and monitoring of the RE curriculum has been greatly strengthened. The capacity to improve is now

very good. The headteacher will no longer have a full-time teaching commitment and enjoys the support and confidence of a united staff and the governing body, which is both knowledgeable and skilled. The school is successfully building collaborations with other schools, sharing expertise and best practice. Surveys show that parents and carers are extremely supportive of the school.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure tracking and assessment are fully embedded in the teaching and learning of RE.
- Engage children more in the planning and preparation of Masses, liturgies and prayer.

### **How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils**

The quality of pupil's learning and progress in RE is very good. Baseline assessment shows that many children enter the school with little or no knowledge of the faith. The pupils are keen to do well; they apply themselves diligently and generally seek to produce their best work. They are enthusiastic and behave well in lessons. Pupils say they enjoy RE and think they do interesting and 'fun things' in their lessons. They respond well to questioning and engage fully in 'partner talk' remaining on task and producing good ideas and answers. The quality of learning in RE for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities is good. Pupils are supported by dedicated skilled teaching assistants, giving them full access to the RE curriculum and worship. Work is well matched to ability and these pupils benefit greatly from the small classes. Their progress is enhanced by the care and support they receive from the other pupils. Standards of attainment are generally good. The work found in books is good but some extended pieces of writing do reflect the satisfactory standards found in literacy. When questioned, Key Stage 1 children displayed an impressive knowledge of the Bible and its structure. They can recall many stories and were particularly keen to explain the meaning of several parables. Pupils have a very good knowledge of the seasons of the liturgical year, prayer and the church. Key Stage 2 pupils' knowledge of the Scriptures is extremely good for their age, as is their knowledge and understanding of prayer and the role of the Church, the liturgical year and its colours, and the Sacraments.

Pupils' contribution to the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. Their behaviour is a living testament to values and teaching of Christ. The school has attracted pupils who have displayed very difficult behaviours and have not settled successfully into other schools. The school has enjoyed considerable success with these pupils. All pupils understand, in an age-appropriate way, the connection between their behaviour towards each other and the Catholic faith. They understand the need for forgiveness, both for themselves and for others and this helps them to overcome relationship issues when they arise. Children generally treat each other well, showing kindness and concern for those in need of help. They expect to be treated fairly at school and as a result they generally respond well to discipline. They are interested in other faiths and became particularly engaged in a project called 'The Ship of Sorrows' about Jewish people and their plight in Europe in the 1930s. They loved their visit to a Singer Hill Synagogue which was undertaken as part of the project. They show curiosity, are imaginative and understand that religious belief and spiritual values are important for many people. They show a great capacity to celebrate and enjoy each others' successes. Pupils are proud to be part of a Catholic school community and they can explain that it is special because Jesus is at the centre of all that is done. The children enjoy contributing to the life of the parish. The parish has recently celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a Flower Festival. The children participated fully in this by attending a special Mass, taking their own flowers as an offering to Mary in the grotto outside church, and creating a beautiful display on the theme of 'The Garden of Eden', with help from teachers and parishioners. The pupils are alert to the needs of others and seek to give support within and beyond the school community.

Pupils' response to and participation to collective worship is outstanding. They read and participate with great enthusiasm and confidence. They are very reverent and respectful but extremely joyful. The singing is a particular strength and lifts collective worship to a higher level. Most children know a variety of traditional prayers of the Church and Mass responses. They show a developing ability to compose their own written prayers. The children respond very well during prayer time, either by joining in traditional class prayers, being ready to say their own simple prayers or by praying

silently. They are totally at ease during prayer or worship. During silent prayer at the end of a lesson observed during inspection the children were exceptionally still, calm and absorbed in the moment. They understand the use and symbolism of religious artefacts and know they should be treated with great respect.

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

Leaders and managers are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. The headteacher lives out his faith in his dealings with all members of the community and is a source of inspiration for all. Two members of staff have been received into the Church during their time in the school. He has the respect and confidence of children, parents, staff and governors. There is explicit evidence that the Catholic mission of the school is a priority along with the moral and spiritual development of every pupil. The headteacher knows his school through and through and accurately identifies its strengths and areas for development. Planning involves the whole school community and is founded on sound evidence and information. Children and parents are canvassed for their views and opinions. Areas for development are tackled systematically and built on areas of strength. Pupils and staff have a high regard for the Catholic life of the school. The office manager plays a significant role in promoting the good Catholic ethos of the school through the Christian manner in which she deals with children, parents, staff and all visitors to the school. The headteacher is also RE subject leader and he monitors and evaluates the provision for religious education well. This leads to ever improving outcomes for pupils. The evaluation of provision is carried out in various ways: monitoring of planning, book trawls, 'learning walks' in classrooms observing RE lessons, auditing display and class altars / prayer boards, annual pupil surveys and informal discussion with pupils. Planning and children's work are monitored every term and outcomes / observations are shared with staff in order to identify strengths and areas for development. There are regular staff meetings where staff can discuss concerns and ideas for development. The headteacher has built strong links with two other Catholic schools sharing good practice and training opportunities. Training is ongoing and closely linked to RE development plan.

The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school is good. Governors show great commitment to ensuring the high profile of the school's Catholic character and its partnership with the parish. Foundation governors provide active links between school and parish communities. They are active in providing liaison and leadership in parish / school projects and activities, such as fund raising and the recent celebration of the church's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Governors have developed a strong understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, through attendance at joint staff / governor development meetings and also by coming into school regularly, to visit, talk with staff and children.

The vice-chair, is a semi-retired LEA literacy consultant and Ofsted inspector, and has worked closely with staff and provided expertise and advice for governors. . She has also taken a leading role in developing the schools policy on community cohesion, which involved several pupil discussion groups. The chair of governors is highly supportive of staff well-being and encourages whole staff engagement through termly team meetings. This is also the forum through which all areas of school life and development priorities are monitored by governors, including RE provision and Catholic mission. They are also informed about the Catholic life of the school and RE through the headteacher's comprehensive reports to governors. The governors provide both challenge and support for the headteacher and they have clear systems for seeking the views of parents and pupils.

The headteacher receives strong support from the parish priest and governors in promoting community cohesion. In keeping with its Catholic ethos, the school has a clear understanding of the religious ethnic and socio-economic character of its community at a local level in the village, in the parish, in the wider community, and in its global context. Pupils, staff and parents make a real contribution to cohesion at all levels locally, nationally and internationally in fund raising, practical support as well as a spiritual dimension. The impact of this is to promote the children's understanding of the strengths, challenges and needs of others across the world community, so that barriers and discrimination are eroded and that all can work for the "common good". Because

the quality of pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good they are being prepared to be responsible citizens. During a lesson, on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, with the older pupils, observed during inspection, great emphasis was placed on vocation and calling. The children understood that whatever they were called to do was important and that they would need the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Pupils seek to 'reach out across the generations' by playing an active part in the Society of St Vincent de Paul luncheon for the elderly held in the school. The choir also sings in various residential homes. The school is involved in local community with other schools, staff, the local churches and particularly its own parish. The school demonstrates real cohesion with local charitable groups, Brothers of the Good Shepherd and Cheshire Homes. School and parish have combined in the past three years to raise funds for CAFOD in Christmas projects. They have also supported the St Mary's and St Christopher's school project in Eluru in India and older children are making 'pen-friends' with some of the pupils. Children worked together on a project in February to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day – creating a whole school quilt showing the journey of 'The Ship of Sorrows' carrying Jewish refugees in the 1930s. This was followed by a powerful assembly acted out by Blue Class and later by a visit to Birmingham Synagogue.

## The quality of the school's work in providing Catholic education

The quality of teaching RE is good with some outstanding practice observed during inspection. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they prepare interesting and stimulating lessons which enable pupils to make good progress. As a result pupils are keen to learn and enjoy their lessons. Good use of ICT by both staff and pupils was observed during inspection and is evident in books and on the walls. Assessment is ongoing throughout lessons and small class sizes give all staff the opportunity to discuss individual work and progress with pupils. The children are confident and willing to answer and ask questions with both staff and fellow pupils. The atmosphere in all classes is affirming and encouraging. The learning environment for all pupils is stimulating and well organised. Excellent RE displays enhance pupils learning. The support given by teaching assistants is very good. They are skilled and work closely with teachers in the planning, preparation and delivery of lessons. Assessment, following diocesan guidelines, is in place but development of assessment procedures continues to be a work in progress. Teachers do have an accurate view of pupils' progress. Teachers listen to, observe and question groups of pupils during lessons in order to reshape tasks and explanations to improve learning.

The time allocation for RE meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and the curriculum fulfils the *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education*. The pupils follow the diocesan *Curriculum Strategy for Religious Education* which has been customised to meet the needs of the school and its pupils. The scheme of work is implemented fully throughout the school on a rolling programme. The curriculum map assigns the units of work for each group to the various terms of the year. Cross curricular approaches are used when appropriate to enhance the scheme. For example, RE is combined with literacy for extended writing activities, with drama when acting out stories and events, with art when studying religious art, with ICT in using PowerPoint to present their work and also research tools and with music for assemblies and Masses. This helps to make the curriculum relevant and interesting to pupils. Lesson observations and pupil interviews support this evaluation. The school links the RE curriculum to the SEAL scheme and delivers PSHE through RE and the Catholic life of the school. Links with charities and groups such as the Fair Trade Foundation enable the school to provide a range of experiences for children during Advent and Lent, all linked to the RE topic of the season. Sex and relationship education is taught throughout the school at age-appropriate levels, using the PSHE scheme: *I am, I know, I can* and the diocesan scheme, *All That I Am* in Years 5 and 6. The headteacher / R.E. co-ordinator attends local meetings with the diocesan RE department adviser and shares current initiatives and thinking with staff at the earliest opportunity via staff meetings.

The provision for collective worship is very good and central to the life of the school. The children are given many opportunities for prayer and praise. An excellent assembly, led by the headteacher was observed during inspection. Children helped to lead the assembly and all pupils were fully engaged. Assemblies are centred on the liturgical year, the scriptures, inspirational people, the mission of the school and SEAL themes linked to RE. The school combines with St Michael's

Primary School on certain feast days to give the children the experience of worshipping in a larger group. The children have also attended the parish Friday Mass and feast days and key events in the life of school are marked by the celebration of Mass in school. The children are taught a range of formal prayers, Mass responses and a wide repertoire of hymns. Collective worship is greatly enhanced by the skill of the music teacher who inspires the children to sing with such joy and gusto. The quality and quantity of religious artefacts around the school is very good. The prayer focus in each classroom is of the highest calibre.