

# DIOCESE OF MIDDLESBROUGH

Inspection of Religious Education  
Collective Worship  
and  
The Catholic Life of the School



**School:** St Benedict's RC Primary School

**Address:** Back Lane  
Ampleforth  
YO62 4DE

**URN:** 121650  
**Head of School:** Mrs Emma Barrs

**Chair:** Mrs Una Stewart

**Date:** 20 June 2018  
**Inspector:** Alan Dewhurst

**Date & Grade of Last Inspection:** 22/23 January 2013 **Grade:** GOOD 2

**Overall Grade for this Inspection:** GOOD 2

A Report from:  
The Diocese of Middlesbrough Schools' Service  
Section 48 Inspection Team  
50a The Avenue  
Linthorpe  
Middlesbrough TS5 6QT

## INTRODUCTION

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Bishop of Middlesbrough (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school. 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 Religious Inspectors and Advisers.

### What Inspection Grades mean

| Grade   | Judgement            | Description   |
|---------|----------------------|---|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding          | These features are highly effective. An outstanding Catholic school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.  |
| Grade 2 | Good                 | These are very positive features of a Catholic school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.  |
| Grade 3 | Requires Improvement | These features, though of adequate quality, require improvement to be good.   |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate           | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate Catholic school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. |

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Benedict's is a small voluntary-aided Catholic primary school, serving a rural village and surrounding countryside in North Yorkshire. Pupils come from a wide area, within 5 Catholic parishes. There are currently 73 pupils on roll, and the school has a planned admission number of 15 per year, with part time nursery provision recently added. The school has fewer pupils than the national average eligible for the pupil premium, from ethnic minorities and or with English as an additional language, although the latter proportion is growing. The school deprivation indicator (0.06) is well below average.

Since the last denominational inspection, the school has experienced much change in relation to staffing and governance. The present school leadership comprises an executive headteacher and head of school, both appointed in 2016. All the teachers were newly appointed to the school at the start of the academic year, with 3 of them newly qualified. An experienced chair of governors from within the Catholic school partnership and five new governors have been appointed since 2016.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The inspection was carried out by one inspector over one day, involving these activities:

- Teaching and learning was observed in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- A 'Godly Play' session for Year 2 pupils was observed.
- A whole school Act of Collective Worship was observed, led by a class of pupils.
- Discussions were held with the head of school, executive headteacher and the Religious Education (RE) subject leader.
- There was also a meeting held with the chair of governors and the parish priest.
- Discussions were also held with a group of pupils and a group of parents.
- A sample of pupils' RE workbooks from every class was scrutinised, along with pupil assessment portfolios and moderated assessments; other records and resources relating to Catholic Life and Collective Worship were also viewed, including items posted on the school's website.
- A range of documents was made available and scrutinised including the Diocesan Self Evaluation Form (DSEF), the RE action plan, the school improvement plan (SIP), attainment and progress data, school policies and minutes of governing body meetings, Reconciliation leaflets, chaplaincy team records and the 'Mini Vinnies' notes.
- Displays and sacred spaces around the school and in classrooms were also noted.
- Further discussions took place with pupils and staff members throughout the day.
- One class of pupils, with two teachers, were away from school on a residential visit during the inspection.

### **Pupil Catchment:**

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| Number of pupils on roll:                                | 73  |
| Planned Admission Number of Pupils:                      | 15  |
| Percentage of pupils baptised RC:                        | 57% |
| Percentage of pupils from other Christian Denominations: | 33% |
| Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths:            | 0%  |
| Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation:      | 10% |
| Percentage of pupils with special needs:                 | 12% |

### **Teaching Staff:**

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Full-time Teachers:              | 5   |
| Part-time Teachers:              | 0   |
| Percentage of Catholic Teachers: | 20% |

### **Support Staff:**

Full-time Classroom Support Staff: 2  
Part-time Classroom Support Staff: 3  
Percentage of Catholic Classroom Support Staff: 40%  
Percentage of teachers with CCRS:

**Percentage of learning time given to R.E:**

All key stages: 10%

**Parishes served by the School:** Our Lady and St Benedict's, Ampleforth; St Aidan's, Oswaldkirk; Our Lady and the Holy Angels, Gilling; St Mary, Helmsley; St John the Evangelist, Easingwold.

# 1. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

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## MAIN FINDINGS

St Benedict's RC Primary is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. It has rapidly improved after recent changes in leadership and staffing thanks to the dedication of its leaders and staff and the commitment of its governors in ensuring that the Catholic education of its pupils is given the highest priority. There is a deep sense of a united community, warm, friendly and welcoming, where every child is seen as a unique and special part of its family. All members of the school community feel a strong sense of identity and commitment to the school motto – 'We grow in faith and knowledge'.

Outcomes for pupils are good. Standards of attainment and progress of pupils have improved significantly within the past year, thanks to purposeful and creative teaching that engages and motivates. Pupils have also benefited from a number of initiatives to develop the Catholic Life of the school, such as their involvement in re-establishing the school's mission and vision statements and the formation of the 'Mini Vinnies' group. Pupils' involvement in preparing and leading Collective Worship has also been significantly increased, in classroom settings and through the formation of a pupils' chaplaincy team.

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is consistently good, with some teaching having outstanding elements. Teachers, supported by teaching assistants, have benefited from very effective professional development that has helped them to bring creativity, knowledge, enthusiasm and passion to the subject. The RE curriculum, based on the 'Come and See' scheme, is enhanced by innovative approaches that help pupils to question, discuss and form understanding of religious ideas, as well as develop knowledge of scripture. The provision of 'Godly Play' is a deeply cherished part of the curriculum, enhancing the Catholic provision to a significant degree. Provision for Collective Worship is outstanding, thanks to a well-organised and accessible range of opportunities for pupils to understand the importance of prayer, to gain spiritually and to deepen understanding within the context of Catholic tradition and the Church's liturgical year. The regular involvement of the parish priest is highly valued. There are good opportunities for pupils to be involved in preparing and leading Collective Worship, but these are not yet set in a developmental progression.

Leadership and management of both the Catholic Life, including Collective Worship, and Religious Education is outstanding. Leaders and governors have shown complete commitment to ensuring that Catholic education is given the highest priority in the school's developmental planning, and have been rigorous in driving improvement. The head of school has led the community in outstanding fashion, supported by all the staff, and by the expertise of the executive headteacher and RE subject leader. The religious formation of staff has been recognised as a model for other schools. Systems for promoting, monitoring and evaluation have been very effective in moving the school forward. Partnerships with local Catholic schools have enhanced this process.

**What the school needs to do to improve further:**

- Sustain improvements in the attainment and progress of pupils and the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education, in view of impending leadership change for school and subject.
- Further develop Collective Worship that is prepared and led by pupils so that there is an agreed structure for the progression of skills at an age appropriate level across the school.
- Increase the participation of more pupils in promoting the Catholic Life of the school, including developing the role of 'Mini Vinnies' and the chaplaincy team sustainably for the future.

## 2. PUPILS

### **How good outcomes are for pupils, taking into account variations between groups**

Pupils are keen to participate in developing the Catholic Life of St Benedict's school. They have played their part in shaping the new mission and vision statements of the school, in developing the new school badge and can recite with confidence the school motto – 'We grow in faith and knowledge'. They understand the requirements of being a member of this Catholic community through the establishment of their own pupils' version of vision and mission and its link to the rule of St Benedict. Pupils take on responsibility within the school, such as in the buddy system, the school council, the eco-team or as sports leaders. Recent initiatives begun this year, the 'Mini Vinnies' group and the chaplaincy team, are having a significant impact on promoting the Catholic Life through their 'faith into action' both within and outside the school, and through their involvement in the leadership of the prayer life of the school. The school has supported a range of charities, notably CAFOD, 'Mary's Meals', the Apostleship of the Sea and diocesan homeless support. The 'Mini Vinnies' are focussed on learning more about those whom they are supporting, and how to contribute what each group needs rather than just raising money. Initiatives such as the introduction of 'Statements to Live By' in Class 4 are helping to actively involve more pupils.

Pupils support each other well, across all age groups within school. 'We're all a big family' was a remark from a pupil that was echoed consistently by her peers and by parents. They respect the different Christian backgrounds among their community, but value the strong Catholic ethos that they experience daily. They are developing a sense of vocation as they move through the school: for example, in response to the question 'Do we all have a mission in Life?' Class 4 pupils recognised their calling in comments such as 'God made us all for a reason' and 'Each of us has a different mission of how to help people – we just have to find out what it is.' Pupils acknowledge the impact that prayer life has on them, and the influence of staff members and the regular visits of the parish priest on their spiritual and moral development.

Most pupils are enthusiastic about their RE lessons, and are engaged by the way topics are approached. Teachers and leaders have worked hard to overcome some previous negative attitudes, and have been very successful, as acknowledged by staff, parents and the pupils themselves. Pupils welcome the chance to ask questions and discuss religious issues, and are reassured that they will be listened to. 'This year is so different,' remarked a pupil, exemplifying pupils' renewed enthusiasm for learning in RE.

Pupils' attainment in RE is now good. Achievement matches that seen in other core subjects, and nearly all year groups are at or above expectations for their stage of development. Progress this year has been accelerated in order to bring standards up to a good level, thanks to rigorous and effective assessment procedures, including regular moderation and validation of levels of attainment. Where progress has slowed, there have been timely interventions and support strategies initiated to close gaps in learning.

Pupils are keen to produce their best work, as evidenced in the quality of presentation in their RE workbooks. Behaviour for learning is good, with most pupils fully engaged

and interested. Pupils recognise their own achievements, as seen in their responses to pupil voice evaluations. They are confident they are doing well and know how to improve, with the school’s renewed approach to giving feedback in ‘active’ and ‘verbal’ manner proving effective, leading to the development of self and peer evaluations of work among older pupils.

Acts of Collective Worship are marked by pupils’ reverence and respect. They sing joyfully and are able to be very reflective at quiet times, as documented in visits by governors, parishioners and parents. Pupils are developing their skills in preparing and leading prayer. They get regular opportunities, from the earliest age, to suggest what should be included in a liturgy, and how to prepare a setting with suitable religious artefacts, particularly in relation to the ‘Respond’ section of each ‘Come and See’ topic. The chaplaincy team, a group of key stage two pupils, are building their own skills, and helping to influence others through their leadership: they plan for and lead the whole school Collective Worship each Wednesday with increasing confidence. Pupils’ skills in preparing and leading worship are not yet being developed progressively, so that understanding and confidence can be built year on year. However, there is opportunity to build on the momentum already created within this year.

Pupils’ understanding of the Church’s liturgical year is good. The school’s provision enables them to appreciate the changing seasons and significant feasts, through the weekly cycle of Collective Worship and celebrations at particular times. Over time, pupils ability to respond to liturgical and sacramental opportunities for worship has deepened, as noted by the parish priest in their participation in the sacrament of reconciliation.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school</li> </ul> | <b>2</b> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education</li> </ul>                   | <b>2</b> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well do pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship</li> </ul>          | <b>2</b> |

### 3. PROVISION

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#### How effective the provision is for Catholic education

The quality of teaching in Religious Education is good overall, with some developing outstanding elements. Thanks to very effective professional development and formation, there is consistency of approach across the school, marked by an enthusiasm and passion for the subject. The school uses the 'Come and See' RE scheme as its core resource, approaching each topic in turn with an emphasis on the 'key question', which continues to be explored throughout the topic, with pupils' comments added to a chart on the 'working wall' in the classroom. Teachers are creative in their approach to engaging pupils in each area of study, developing knowledge of scripture and helping pupils to relate religious stories and concepts to their own lives. Lessons are planned with specific learning objectives, linked to the driver words associated with each level of attainment. The school's adoption of the 'must, should, could' approach to what pupils can achieve gives them a sense of challenge and ownership of their own learning. Teaching assistants involve themselves actively in supporting pupils and enabling them to access their learning.

In the EYFS and in Key Stage One, pupils are immersed in a range of practical learning tasks that help them to embed their learning. Through the use of art, music, drama, design and pupils' own imaginations, teachers fully engage the class in their learning. Pupils enjoy involving themselves in role play, sequencing stories, and recording ideas in 'scatter charts' around a piece of scripture or religious art, for example. They are helped to achieve higher levels in their learning through the use of such aids as the mobile working wall, used in all classes, to help pupils to link key vocabulary, scripture, hymns and prayers to the topic; in older classes this is developed into making links that include Catholic social teaching, the sacraments and beliefs. Pupils' opportunities to demonstrate their understanding through extended pieces of work, particularly in writing, becomes more apparent in the oldest pupils. Writing opportunities in other classes are more limited and expectations in this regard are less ambitious.

The school's RE curriculum is further enriched by the commitment to 'Godly Play'. Pupils enjoy these sessions on a fortnightly basis, led as they are with great sensitivity. They help to develop understanding of scripture, explore how this relates to their own lives, to practise reflection and being still and calm and to share ideas with confidence in a secure place. Parents expressed their appreciation of 'Godly Play' as a "crucial part of the curriculum", and emphasised how much pupils loved their regular opportunities.

The school has shown strong commitment to ensuring that the pastoral needs of pupils are met, in a variety of ways. There is an active 'Rainbows' group, providing support to those who have experienced loss or bereavement, and emotional literacy support (ELSA) for pupils in difficulty. The school leadership has recognised the need to address the mental health of its pupils as a priority, particularly in response to some groups experiencing very frequent changes of teacher in their school career. Staff have received training in how to tackle attachment issues, to help pupils regulate emotions and there have been regular mindfulness days to help with this area. Parents recognise how the caring and concern of all staff members permeates

the school, and provides for their children’s welfare. ‘Warmth radiates from every classroom’ was a typical comment.

The school’s provision of Collective Worship is outstanding. Acts of Collective Worship are high profile, central to the life of the school. A weekly cycle enables pupils to experience a mixture of liturgies. Whole school services are led by the head teacher and the chaplaincy team each week, and there is a liturgy in each classroom, led by teacher or pupils. Each class in turn prepares and leads a liturgy based on their current learning in RE in turn, and a whole school celebration of achievement brings the week to a close.

Each month throughout the year, a particular feast or element of the liturgical year is celebrated, with parents invited to participate. Examples in the autumn term focussed on harvest, the Rosary, remembrance and Advent. The themes chosen for worship show a deep understanding of the Church’s mission, and elements of purpose and direction are clearly visible.

Thanks to the extensive programme of formation for staff, there is a high degree of confidence in leading liturgy throughout the school, extending to the development of pupils’ involvement in each class. The parish priest plays a prominent role in developing the Collective Worship provision through his very regular visits to the school, enabling pupils to be confident in their prayer life and to develop their understanding of its importance. Parents remarked on how well each special celebration is made accessible to pupils at their own level, such as the ‘burning of sins’ in a fire on Ash Wednesday and the focus on two stations of the cross in Holy Week, rather than a traditional service encompassing all.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education</li> </ul>    | <b>2</b> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils’ learning</li> </ul> | <b>2</b> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school</li> </ul>                         | <b>1</b> |

## 4. LEADERS, MANAGERS AND GOVERNORS

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

Leaders and governors' effectiveness in developing the Catholic Life of the school, including Collective Worship, is outstanding because they have shown the deepest commitment to making it their highest priority. Following a period of turbulence, there has been renewed dedication to ensuring that the Catholic education that pupils experience is of the highest quality. This commitment has extended into the promotion, monitoring and evaluation of RE, with high levels of expertise having a significant impact on the quality of teaching and the attainment and progress of pupils.

The head of school has been inspirational in bringing about improvements in a short space of time, supported by the governors, executive headteacher, RE subject leader and diocesan advice. She has also enjoyed the full support and commitment of all the staff in effecting change.

There has been outstanding formation of staff in understanding the mission of the Catholic school. This has included in-house training by the diocesan RE adviser, a staff inauguration and formation day (on a Saturday!), professional development in school and at diocesan courses, and very effective partnerships with other Catholic schools managed by the executive headteacher. This has had a major impact on the sense of unity and belonging for staff members, and has enabled them to develop their own enthusiasm and passion and convey these to the pupils.

Evaluations of teachers exemplify the impact of this developmental work: 'The school is led by people who live by gospel values' and 'Teaching RE is my favourite subject' were just two of a range of positive comments expressed. The induction and ongoing formation of staff was also recognised by the diocese as an example of outstanding practice, and has been shared with other schools.

The RE subject leader, from a partner school, has been extremely effective in developing standards in the subject. The setting of high expectations within a clear and easily understood framework has been backed up by excellent modelling of practice, and rigorous monitoring, analysis and evaluation. Her expertise has enabled standards to rise significantly.

The school's partnerships have also been very effectively developed, particularly with St Mary's Primary School, Malton, and St Joseph's Primary School, Pickering, enabling best practice to be shared as well allowing pupils to have valuable joint experiences. These partnerships are being extended with the appointment of a new joint head teacher with St Joseph's from September.

The governing body has been very effective in its formulation of the strategic direction of the school, with its emphasis on the development of its Catholic identity and mission as its highest priority. This is evidenced in its strategic development plans, in

its recruitment policy and in its role as a critical friend in holding the school leadership to account, noted in its monitoring records and the minutes of its meetings.

The governors and leadership have ensured that recommendations of the previous denominational inspection have been addressed and that all statutory and canonical requirements are fulfilled.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How well leaders, managers and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school, including collective worship, and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils</li></ul> | <b>1</b> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How well leaders, managers and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils</li></ul>   | <b>1</b> |