

INSPECTION REPORT

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

Name of School **St Brendan's RC Primary School, Brookfold Lane, Harwood, Bolton BL2 4DZ**

Inspection date 27th March 2018

Reporting Inspectors Peter Eavers, Sue Molloy

Type of school	Voluntary Aided
URN	105246
Age range of pupils	4 - 11
Number on roll	207
Appropriate authority	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	Joanne Robinson
Headteacher	Marie Kwiatkowski
Religious Education Subject Leader	Catherine Pearson
Date of previous inspection	23 rd April 2013

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)	1	
The quality of Religious Education (incorporating Word)	1	
The quality of Worship	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Brendan's RC Primary School is a single form entry primary school serving the parish of Corpus Christi, Bolton. There are 207 pupils currently on roll, who come from a wide catchment area consisting of owner-occupied, rented and social housing. Standards on entry to Reception are broadly average. The admission number is 30 and 84% of pupils are baptised Catholics. 2.9% of pupils are eligible for free school meals and 8.7% for pupil premium, putting the school in the third quintile nationally for deprivation. 10.2% have been identified as having a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND) and 1% have English as an additional language. 9 of the 10 teachers are Catholic. The headteacher is a Diocesan Leader of Education and Section 48 inspector and has led the school since 2008.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- **The committed, dedicated and reflective leadership of the headteacher, governors and whole staff team which ensures that the school continually strives to improve**
- **The excellent attitudes towards, and enthusiasm for learning of the children**
- **The high profile given to Scripture across the school which deepens the children's knowledge and understanding of the Word of God and enhances their prayer life**
- **The welcome given to all within and beyond the school community which promotes a strong sense of ownership and belonging and ensures all members of the school family feel valued and listened to**
- **The range of opportunities provided for children to lead and influence the life of the school**

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING

St Brendan's RC Primary School embodies the idea of a Catholic family where all are welcome, valued, loved and nurtured. Since the previous inspection, which also graded the school outstanding in all areas, the identified areas for development have been met in full and the school has continued to develop and move forward as a result of exceptional leadership. The recently reviewed Mission Statement forms the basis of and driving force for everything that happens within the school. The beautiful learning environment reflects the school's emphasis on ensuring that all within and beyond the school community feel welcomed and valued and that the Word of God and person of Jesus Christ are recognised as central to all that happens in the school. The governors are very supportive and effective in their work and show a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education. High quality Religious Education, prayer and worship are central to the life of the school. The extremely hard-working and dedicated staff team have created a loving, safe and inspiring environment in which all children are encouraged and empowered to grow and develop as unique children of God with the confidence to stand up for what they know to be right. The happy, well behaved children are enthusiastic and eloquent about their learning and proud of their school which they describe as a "respectful, loving, welcoming, gentle, faithful and fun" place which teaches them to persevere when things get difficult. Parents overwhelmingly support the work of the school and feel welcomed and valued.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

St Brendan's is extremely well led by an exceptional headteacher who is committed to providing the children with the very best that a Catholic education can offer. She is very reflective and inclusive in her leadership which ensures that the school continually strives to improve. She is very well supported by a dedicated and skilled senior leadership team, including the Religious Education subject leader, and a talented and hardworking staff team, who share her vision for the school and have been empowered to take this vision still further. They are ambitious for the children in their care and set high expectations of themselves and the children. They are challenged and supported effectively by senior leaders to help them achieve these expectations. The governors are extremely committed to the school and its Catholic mission and provide very effective support and challenge to that end. The priests of the parish are frequent visitors to the school and their contribution to the spiritual development of both staff and children is highly valued. Pupil leadership is extremely well established in the school with numerous opportunities for children to take on roles of responsibility across the school, including the GIFT Team, School

Council, prayer partners, peer mediators, prefects and the recently appointed Caritas Ambassadors. The pupils take a pride in these roles and carry them out diligently and conscientiously. They talk confidently about the activities they have organised and the impact these have had on the school, including through the School Council's regular reports to governors. Continuing professional development for staff is a clear priority for the school and that, combined with effective and rigorous ongoing self-evaluation, ensures that leaders know the school very well and are well set to bring about continuous improvement. Opportunities for staff spiritual development are highly valued and contribute to the sense of all in the school growing as a family of God.

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

The welcome afforded to all within and beyond the school community is exceptionally warm, caring and inclusive. There is a clear sense of respect for all, as evidenced by the school having been awarded the Rights Respecting School Silver Award. Parents overwhelmingly support the work of the school and feel confident to approach the staff with any concerns, safe in the knowledge that these will be addressed effectively. They feel that their views and those of their children are valued, respected and acted upon and that staff know their children very well. They feel that they are part of 'one big family' and those spoken to described that they felt "incredibly lucky" and "privileged" to be able to send their children to "such a lovely school". As one parent put it, "My child goes in smiling and comes out smiling". Procedures to keep children safe are given the highest priority and children feel safe, nurtured and cared for. Staff provide excellent role models for the children in the way they treat one another, embodying the emphasis given to 'love' in the school's mission statement. As a result, the children's behaviour and the care they show towards one another is exemplary and this is especially evident in the way older children care for their younger peers. The school puts a high priority on developing 'Growth Mindsets' in the children, enabling them to overcome setbacks and develop resilience and perseverance. This is helping to create children who are confident to stand up for what they know to be right and be true witnesses to Jesus Christ, as evidenced through the work of GIFT chaplains, peer mediators and the School Council. The school supports an extensive range of charities and this work is contributing to the development of children who have a strong sense of justice, compassion and fairness.

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word) IS OUTSTANDING

The regularly reviewed Mission Statement, "Love life, love learning, achieve together in God's love" is alive and evident in the daily life of the school. It clearly drives all that happens in St Brendan's and impacts on policies, procedures and practice at every level. Religious Education is the core of the Core Curriculum and creativity and 'risk taking' are clearly encouraged in Religious Education lessons to ensure that children are inspired and stimulated by the Word of God and its relevance to their lives. Sacred Scripture is given high prominence throughout the school through beautiful wall displays and these scriptural quotes are known and used very well by both staff and children. Indeed, high quality religious displays are a feature of the school and witness to the importance given to Religious Education across the curriculum. Outstanding teaching and very high quality questioning to deepen children's understanding, were witnessed by the inspectors. It is clear that children enjoy and are proud of their learning in Religious Education. The quality of work in books is of a very high standard and teachers use marking and feedback effectively to further the children's learning. Pupils use bibles well, are able to find and reference scriptural passages without assistance by the end of Year 6 and are challenged to think deeply about the Big Questions of purpose and meaning across the curriculum. They talk confidently and eloquently about the vital importance of respect and understanding for the beliefs and cultures of others. They learn about other faiths in lessons, from visitors and through a range of activities including multi-faith tours of the area and a Faith Week which was led by the children and attended by parents. Parents speak very highly of the quality of Religious Education provided for their children by the school.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

Prayer is central and integral to the daily life of the school and staff and pupils are confident and skilled in planning and leading pupil-centred prayer and worship which is creative, inclusive and relevant. This was clearly evident in the excellent whole school worship focussed on the events of Holy Week, which was led by the GIFT chaplaincy team and involved children

from every class in the school. Children and parents are rightly proud of the newly opened Chaplaincy Room which provides a beautiful spiritual space for children, parents and staff to join together in prayer and reflection. Inspectors witnessed this being used superbly in a fully inclusive class act of worship led and written by the children which exemplified prayerful reverence, deep spiritual reflection and excellent, respectful behaviour. There is a well-defined, developmental prayer programme which ensures that children are introduced to age appropriate prayers but also encouraged and supported to compose their own and explore different ways of praying, through thinking, doing and being. Older children provide wonderful examples of support for the faith journey of their younger peers through the work of the GIFT chaplaincy team, prayer partners and prefects. There are very good links between home, school and parish who work closely and effectively to support the children through the Sacramental Programme. Links with the parish are further reinforced by the involvement of priests in the daily life of the school. The school regularly uses the church for class and school masses which are well attended by parents and parishioners. Parents spoke highly of these home school parish links saying that it made it feel them “feel like a family”.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- **To challenge children’s thinking even further to deepen their understanding and responses to the Big Questions and further develop their roles as agents of change and transformation**
- **Continue to embed the role of Caritas Ambassadors to provide increased opportunities for children to bear witness to Christ through local, national and international causes**