



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and Inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
of the Education Act 2005

URN 100631

St Bede's Catholic Infant and Nursery School
Thornton Road
Clapham Park
SW12 0LF

Inspection date: 30 April 2015

Chair of Governors: Mrs Meabh Quoirin
Co-Headteachers: Mrs Ewa Ostrynska
Mrs Catherine Davis (on secondment)
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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St Bede's Catholic Infant and Nursery school is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Lambeth Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Lambeth Local Authority. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 82%. The principal parish which the school serves is St Bede's, Clapham Park with an increasing percentage coming from St Simon and St Jude's, Streatham Hill which is now mentioned explicitly within the school's admissions criteria. An increasing number of ethnic minority families also choose to worship in their own chaplaincies. This percentage has varied over recent years owing to mobility. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education across both key stages is 10%.

The school takes pupils from 3 to 7 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 231. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. An average proportion of pupils have special educational needs or disabilities. 12% of pupils receive extra support in class. The intake reflects a wide range of ethnic and social backgrounds. The largest group is Black African at 33%, followed by White European with a growing number coming from Eastern Europe, predominantly Poland. A high percentage of pupils at 82% have English as an additional language with 41% at an early stage of English. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is above average.

Date of previous inspection:

06/05/2010

Overall Grade:

2

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

St Bede's is an inner city two form entry Catholic Infant and Nursery school, with a strong Catholic ethos. There is much to celebrate in this outstanding school. It is in a productive soft Federation with St Bernadette's Catholic Junior School that provides continuity for pupils. It is a vibrant Christian community where pupils are increasingly encouraged to take a greater part in the school's ongoing development. A new child-friendly school vision has been recently created in consultation with pupils, parents, staff and governors. This links directly to the school's explicit core values. The ethos of the school reflects the teachings of Christ as evidenced in the respect, tolerance and forgiveness shown to each other. A parent responded in their questionnaire, 'I believe the school's core values are very important. The children are respectful, responsible, resilient, reflective and everyone does matter.' Pupils are taught that everyone is an individual and each person is valued as a special child of God. Pupils appreciate the many opportunities afforded them to build on their individual talents and become educated young people with an awareness of their responsibilities to help build a more just and caring society.

The Co-Headship model of leadership for St Bede's is an exemplary model of team leadership. It is collegiate by nature and strong in operation. The appointment of a new Religious Education leader in September 2014 and significant budgetary allocation in the last financial year have provided impetus for the new subject leader to move this curriculum area forward as a recognised core subject within the school. Leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate provision for the Catholic life of the school and Religious Education. Plans to realise the mission of the school are clearly in place and there is secure evidence of the capacity for ongoing improvement. Leadership is distributed very well across the school and the Religious Education leader plays a very effective role in the increasing success of Religious Education. Governors are well informed and supportive of the school. School governance is a strength of the school as a result of the exceptional Chair of Governors. She is passionate about the school, is knowledgeable, has a clear understanding of school governance and is a driving force behind the development of governor involvement in the school. She is to be commended for generating a strong professional relationship with the school that serves to provide a truly 'critical friend'.

St Bede's Infant and Nursery School is clearly an excellent school, focussed on challenge in a drive to maximise pupils' outcomes in every aspect of its Catholic life. It provides a warm, nurturing and very caring environment for pupils in which they develop and learn. The excellent behaviour of the pupils, the quality of the curriculum and the dedication of all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are noteworthy aspects of this school. There are opportunities from the moment children enter nursery, for spiritual and moral development and for learning about the teachings and life of Jesus. Prayer and worship are integral to the daily life of the school. The school is reflective and there is a joyful learning environment. This is a school that is recognised as a great asset to its local Catholic community. St Bede's Catholic identity permeates the school's daily life with parents praising the standard of care shown by all staff. There are exemplary relationships evident throughout the school, characterised by Christian care and concern for others.

The school follows 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' Religious Education scheme of work, which enables the children to develop a deep understanding of the Catholic faith and develop morally and spiritually. Staff are well supported by the Religious Education subject leader. The children also enrich their knowledge by learning about different faiths and they

also learn the importance of helping others by supporting a range of charities, both at home and abroad.

Since the last Religious Education inspection the assessment of Religious Education has been developed and a levelled portfolio of pupils' work has been introduced. Outstanding teaching and learning has been disseminated throughout the school offering extra support to Newly Qualified Teachers and other teachers and this work is ongoing.

As a parent wrote, "My children are happy and well looked after. They always look forward to going to this excellent school."

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

The issues from the last inspection have been addressed and continue to provide a focus for future development. The leadership has successfully communicated an inspiring spiritual and academic vision for the school, leading to its present effectiveness and ability to maintain and develop this even further. Staff are good role models and are encouraged to improve their skills through in-house support and training. The school leadership is very effective and recent interventions in teaching and learning and further staff support ensure that the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement. As the relatively new subject leader builds on her excellent work to date and the increasing involvement of the Governing Body is embedded, the school will undoubtedly be able to maintain the criteria for an "outstanding" judgement.

Governors, Headteacher and staff should now review the teaching of Religious Education to:

- Increase pupil achievement and enjoyment of their lessons by providing more cross curricular opportunities for example in drama and IT, and provide more open ended and varied recording opportunities.
- Examine the allocation of time for Religious Education across the week to ensure lesson length best meets the learning needs of pupils in Key Stage 1.

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school

Prayer and worship are very good in the school and pupils get ample opportunity to reflect and compose their own prayers. The Parish Priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school and helps with prayer and worship in addition to providing a greatly valued chaplaincy role to the whole school community.

Assemblies are happy occasions in which the pupils are given time to worship and pray in a meaningful way. Staff also pray together and with pupils have a strong sense of belonging to the St Bede's community. Music is at the centre of worship at St Bede's and is greatly enhanced by it. Music was also evident in classrooms in addition to the assembly. All classrooms have a prayer corner and these are of a high quality with some lovely pupils' work on display. Displays in the school are of a very high standard and the artwork seen around the school enhances the sense of pupils' awe and wonder. Pupils are given opportunities for spiritual development and these are very age appropriate and greatly support understanding. Time is regularly set aside for guided prayer and reflection. Moral education is very good in the school and even the very youngest children are given time to think and consider their answers in a sensitive, nurturing and caring way. Pupils show a keenness to take part in all aspects of the Catholic life of the school and make a contribution themselves.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

St Bede's builds successfully on the generally low levels of attainment on entry, with progress being made by pupils by the end of Year 2. This sees them in the main meeting age related expectations. The school is working hard to secure even greater progress particularly for the more able through further differentiation of the curriculum by task. This will provide greater challenge and give more opportunities for independent learning. Pupils clearly value their work in Religious Education which is of excellent quality overall. Pupils' workbooks show evidence of coverage, differentiation and a range of activities. Written work is well presented and marking is positive and interactive. The assessment process enables staff to plan effectively and the school uses levels of attainment to target and plan ahead to meet the needs of individual children. The very good quality of education and current focus on assessment and tracking is ensuring that standards are likely to be maintained and improved further. The spiritual development of pupils is given a high priority and is rooted in the teachings and beliefs of the Catholic Church. Workbooks and conversations with pupils indicate that there are many opportunities for reflection on the links between the life and teachings of Jesus and their own lives. They show a depth of understanding of these concepts which they are able to articulate. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils show respect for each other and themselves. The school provides an excellent atmosphere for social and moral education and conversations with pupils indicate that this has an impact on behaviour and attitudes demonstrated by a strong sense of service to each other. Parents and families are given opportunities to become involved in their children's Religious Education through newsletters, consultation meetings and questionnaires. A parent commented, "I thank the school for their encouragement of our children, God bless you all."

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

Daily Collective Worship is important in the life of the school because it provides an affirming experience for pupils, staff and visitors. It is well planned and well resourced. Pupils clearly enjoy opportunities to spend time as a whole school in Collective Worship listening, singing, reflecting and praying. The behaviour is excellent and pupils show much eagerness to sing and pray. They learn response prayers saying sorry for wrong actions and thoughts and know they sing 'Jesus songs' because they 'believe in God and Jesus'. Pupils help to lead worship regularly, sharing stories and using opportunities for drama. Worship is consistently and recognisably Catholic, honouring the Catholic tradition and helping pupils to understand liturgical colours through the year. There are excellent links with the parish in effectively supporting worship.

The pupils created a unique School Creed during a 2014 Religious Education week. All pupils from Reception to Year 2 know and understand this special prayer.

Pupils write their own prayers regularly and these are displayed in each classroom in the prayer corner. They are encouraged to take opportunities to write new prayers at various times and independently. They participate regularly throughout the day in the traditional prayers of the church, for example 'Hail Mary' and 'Our Father'. Pupils are actively involved in all acts of Collective Worship. They listen attentively and are reverent and respectful at all times. Parents, carers and visitors comment on their reverence. Pupils write their own prayers to be shared at assemblies and are aware of the important events in the Church calendar and appreciate the importance of key times in the Church year, such as Lent, Easter, Advent and Christmas. The older children are aware of the liturgical colours associated with different times of the year and many are able to discuss this. Pupils regularly visit the church for a range of reasons, and the clergy help with teaching aspects of the curriculum where possible. The children feel comfortable visiting the church and know how to behave while they are there. Benediction is a popular form of Collective Worship among Year 2 pupils who eagerly participate and have a chance to ask a priest or the subject leader questions regarding their faith.

Pupils actively participate in school Masses singing hymns and partaking in the bringing of symbols of their work/prayers along with the gifts of bread and wine during the Offertory Procession (Year 1) and reading the Bidding Prayers (Year 2). During class prayers, pupils from Key Stage 1 have a Prayer Leader.

In an assembly attended pupils were fully engaged in the topic of 'Love thy Neighbour' and the school's core values linked to the topic. Pupils read bidding prayers with aplomb, with all pupils engaged by singing and signing a response using British Sign Language and thereby sending a strongly inclusive message to the pupils with hearing loss. Staff participation added another very positive dimension. Nursery pupils celebrated a period of reflection in a circle with a candle focal point. These young people showed considerable reverence and fully participated in spontaneous 'Thank you' prayers led by an excellent Nursery practitioner.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

School leaders and governors, under an excellent Chair of Governors, supported by the committed and resilient leadership of the Co-Headteachers, have established strong systems of assessment and tracking of each child's progress to secure rapid intervention if problems are identified with learning. Governors are developing robust procedures to monitor school work and to both support and challenge school managers. This enhanced professional vigour is also being channelled to further improve St Bede's. Collective Worship and Religious Education meet statutory requirements and are strongly promoted as key elements of the challenge to educate children as rounded, sensitive, caring, thoughtful and spiritual individuals; a perspective that leaders and managers are determined to safeguard. Governors carefully ensure that staff have every opportunity to access training and support to gain skills for both their work and own professional development, particularly in respect of Religious Education, and to equip them for greater responsibility as part of a drive to support succession planning.

Collective Worship held in church at special times of year is greatly valued by parents from a range of faith backgrounds. The school works with the parish and Diocese to promote world-wide links and to help those in need.

School newsletters have a weekly Religious Education focus and the parish newsletter (available for the school staff in the staff room) highlights key events in the school.

The parish website has a link to the school website and vice versa. Families receive the weekly 'Wednesday Word' explaining the Gospel for the coming weekend. They also receive half-termly Religious Education curriculum newsletters explaining the upcoming topics and how they can support these at home. Parents commented that they felt well supported to help their children's religious development as a result of the support given to them by the school. The Parish Priest regularly attends assemblies and assists preparing the pupils for liturgical celebrations.

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leaders, governors and managers are conscientious in promoting monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic life of the school and in the way the school plans and implements improvement to outcomes for pupils. This is reflected in the School Vision which was developed by all who form part of the school community including parents, clergy, governors and children.

The Co-Headteachers provide focused leadership and live out their vision creating a truly caring community. Leaders, governors and managers are developing their joint use of monitoring data to evaluate school performance, celebrate and plan future improvements.

The Self-Evaluation Document provides clear evidence of the school's current monitoring, analysis and self-challenge. It provides a firm basis on which to celebrate strengths and

outlines areas for development. There is also detailed evidence of the Catholic life of the school through the document. Governors are gaining a good knowledge of the Catholic life of the school, which will assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. They are effective in helping to shape the direction of the school. Governors regularly attend training regarding Catholic life and Religious Education. They receive regular updates from the Headteachers regarding the Catholic life of the school and take pride in the school's very close and well established links with the parish community.

There are excellent home, school, parish links through the monthly Sunday Family Mass and support for the 'With You Always' Sacramental programme as pupils move through the Federation. Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all is maintained as a priority. Opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in the Catholic life and mission of the school and positive relationships are evident at every level within the school. The Religious Education and Catholic life of the school is reported on to the full Governing Body in the Headteachers' report to governors. The school improvement plan is reviewed, updated and agreed by the full Governing Body annually. There is an annual governors' visit to the school to monitor and review Religious Education provision and the governors have input into the Religious Education self-evaluation document. As part of their ongoing curriculum reviews it would be an opportune time to jointly update this document.

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The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

The teaching seen during the inspection ranged from good to outstanding. The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education is of a very high standard. It is consistently effective in ensuring that pupils are interested and engaged and make progress by building on previous learning. Teachers provide a range of opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and for older pupils to have more opportunities for self-directed learning. Outstanding teaching encourages pupils' enjoyment of and enthusiasm for Religious Education.

In a Year 1 lesson observed on the Resurrection pupils were actively engaged throughout. Excellent use was made of music and the interactive board. The lesson was marked by strong open-ended questioning and classroom management of a high order. The teacher was challenging and set high standards to which the pupils rose. Previous learning was built on with good use being made of talk partners. A reception lesson was uplifting and joyful. The teacher was enthusiastic and moderated her voice, holding pupils spellbound as she told them the story of Mary Magdalene discovering Jesus at the tomb. Pupils clearly understood who Mary Magdalene was and the importance of her message. The lesson concluded with singing and dancing using streamers that pupils had previously made. The pupils' behaviour was outstanding. The lesson was well planned with good cross-curricular links to other areas of learning.

Effort and achievement at all stages of learning is celebrated. In the Foundation Stage, themes are reinforced through appropriate continuous provision. There is evidence of how Religious Education is promoting and developing many early skills. Teaching assistants and support workers provide outstanding care and support to pupils. They are deployed effectively and show sensitivity to pupils' needs. Good quality resources are used within lessons and teachers use Information Communication Technology at times to maximise learning, particularly through use of the interactive board. Planning is annotated and detailed and shows good evaluations. Teachers take into account pupils' prior learning and plan for some differentiated tasks so that the work consolidates, builds and extends their knowledge and understanding. Consistent use of the driver words emphasises differentiation and extends and challenges pupils' learning further. Developing planning for 'Respond' at the end of topics allows teachers and pupils to work collaboratively in their understanding and celebration of learning. Pupils are given effective opportunities to discuss their work and share learning objectives. This would benefit from being applied more consistently to enable them to evaluate their own work and further their learning. Pupils are informed orally and through marking, of their progress and are guided on how to improve the quality of their work. Marking is positive, affirming an understanding of the learning focuses. The school has assessment strategies in place which provide detailed information on the achievement of all the pupils. These support teachers in identifying how well pupils are working and assists them in tackling underachievement.

It is noteworthy how explicitly cultural differences are celebrated with registration in the mornings being undertaken in different languages, welcome signs around the school being in the languages spoken by the children and parents being invited to come in to talk to the children about their countries, communities and traditions. The school makes use of external visitors to support both an understanding of other cultures and development of pupils understanding of other faiths, for example, story-tellers from other cultures, the celebration of different religions such as Hindu and Jewish faiths, Year 2 IPC (International

Primary Curriculum) topic: Celebrations' encompassing Diwali and Hanukah. A Religious Education faith week is planned every summer term to further enrich and develop pupils' knowledge and spirituality with reception pupils visiting the synagogue, Year 1 studying Islam, Year 2 visiting a Buddhist temple.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning

The Religious Education curriculum is strong in promoting pupils' learning. The school uses 'The Way, The Truth and The Light' Religious Education scheme which meets the requirements of the 'Curriculum Directory for Religious Education'. Appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each pupil. Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to Religious Education fulfilling the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales.

The Religious Education curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development. Teachers endeavour to customise learning to meet the needs of individuals with learning support assistants being ably deployed. Pupils explore the beliefs and values of other faiths, including visits to other places of worship to support their learning. During faith week some parents shared their beliefs and practices with the pupils. This helps to promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently and is a notable strength within the school. The school supports a number of initiatives including Anti-Bullying, Black History and International Weeks.

The Parish Priest is on the Governing Body, attends all meetings and has strong links with the school and is a frequent visitor to the school. He provides an excellent link to the Governing Body as a result of this involvement and from his previous role as a long serving Chair of Governors.

The subject leader reviews and assesses the implementation of the Religious Education scheme through informal discussions with the class teachers and seeks to address any areas of concern in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Planning demonstrates links to prior learning and is well used to build on new learning.

Lessons are well paced to ensure time is used productively. The length of some lessons in Key Stage 1 means that all Religious Education teaching is concentrated on two days; some shorter lessons would allow the time allocated to Religious Education to be spread more evenly across the week. They provide opportunities for the pupils to reflect on the Church's teaching and understand how this relates to everyday life. Different levels of questioning encourage pupils to extend their knowledge and clarify their understanding. Pupils respond with enthusiasm because they are engaged and motivated, therefore they are eager to display this by participating in additional activities such as, Travelling Crib, Lenten Hearts Project, a Rosary group, Religious Education and homework.

The subject leader and senior leaders observe Religious Education lessons to provide constructive feedback and update staff with any resources or ideas to secure the very best possible teaching. In order to improve, teachers support each other during planning, for example, by evaluating lessons and sharing good practice. The subject leader carries out an audit of resources in the summer term to ensure they are appropriate for teaching and learning. Additional resources, such as candles or cloths for the prayer corners are easily obtained from the subject leader when needed. The effectiveness of the resources is checked during learning walks and planning scrutiny.

The school has supported the development of the religious knowledge of five members of staff, by funding the 'Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies'. Three members of staff have completed the course, with one still training and one member to begin the course in September 2015. The subject leader meets regularly with other Religious Education leaders from the local schools' cluster in order to enhance the learning in this curriculum area.

The monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education has been developed to a high standard. The marking of the work follows the whole school marking policy, which has been reviewed since the last inspection. Pupils are given 'next steps' as a part of teacher and pupil individual communication/discussion. Teachers mark work with pupils present whenever possible. Pupil ability to self-assess is strong; they are reflective when considering their own learning. The teachers use a variety of strategies for self-assessment such as 'Thumbs Up and Thumbs Down' and 'Traffic Lights'. All students at St Bede's are valued as individuals, thus the school's expectations of pupils' learning is of a high standard. Such expectations are reflected in the school's stated core values, which are referred to throughout the school day. A high standard of planning lessons helps to achieve these expectations through a particular focus on the 'We are learning to (WALT)' and 'What I'm Looking For (WILF)' enabling structured learning and encouraging pupils to exceed expectations.

Parents expressed appreciation of the range of events available to their children out of school hours, which they felt were very well organised.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

Collective Worship has a high profile and is central to the life of the school. The Collective Worship provided is outstanding in reflecting the Catholic character of the school and taking into account the variety of faith backgrounds among the pupils. Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils. Opportunities are provided to enable full, active and conscious participation of the whole school community. Pupils are enabled to pray formally and informally using a variety of prayer methods and styles.

The school provides opportunities for staff to develop their skills in planning, leading and evaluating Collective Worship. The necessary resources and opportunities to help pupils to develop the skills necessary to plan, lead and participate in Collective Worship are provided. Opportunities are in place for parents, carers, the local and wider faith communities to participate in a variety of celebrations of 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' programme and the Church's liturgical year.

Pupils are encouraged to think about their ability to make good and bad choices in the light of the choice Mary made in saying 'Yes' to God. Pupils are taught the formal prayers of the Church and are encouraged to compose their own. Parents are encouraged to become involved in the prayer life of the school by contributing to prayer walls in the hall and the Nursery. All classes have a focus for prayer. These are without exception attractive, well maintained and pupil friendly. Aids to prayer, such as music, candles and artefacts are used very effectively by teachers.

St Bede's provides quality experiences of prayer and liturgy that support pupils' spiritual development. These communal acts of prayer and the liturgical celebrations of the Church form part of the everyday life of the school. Communal acts of prayer and liturgical celebrations of the Church are all related to pupils learning with pupils being encouraged to pray in their mother tongue. Opportunities for prayer take place within the classroom at the start of each day, before lunch and again at the end of each day. Prayer in the classrooms

and in assemblies always includes a prayer focus. In addition, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) children have a reflection time after their fruit time during which they can offer a prayer.

Leaders and governors are invited to attend and lead group acts of worship, which take the form of whole school assemblies. The school has a supportive Parish Priest who is in school regularly helping pupils to experience what it means to belong to, or take part in the worshipping community of the Church. St Bede's staff gather together every Monday morning, before the school day for Staff Prayer and Reflection and visitors are actively invited to attend these gatherings. All classes attend the local church to celebrate Mass with the parishioners and parents, in order to further help their understanding of the richness of the Eucharist. Pupils are fortunate to experience the richness of the liturgical life of the church in so many ways throughout the year such as the Stations of the Cross during Lent and a joyful Mass at Easter and Christmas.

Crucifixes and prayer corners are integral to the layout of each classroom. The school's reception area has a permanent religious interactive display which is changed to reflect the liturgical life of the church. Pupils are actively involved in all acts of Collective Worship. They listen attentively and are reverent and respectful at all times.

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