



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST BENEDICT'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL ATHERSTONE, WARWICKSHIRE

Inspection dates 15th – 16th January 2008
Reporting Inspector Mr Gerry Campbell

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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| Type of School | Catholic Primary |
| Age range of pupils | 4-11 years |
| Number on roll | 161 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governors | Mrs Dawn Ford |
| School address | Church Walk Atherstone Warwickshire CV9 1PS |
| Telephone number | 01827 712320 |
| E-mail address | head@3501.wgfl.net |
| Parish | St Benedict's |
| Date of previous inspection | June 2005 |
| DCSF School Number | 937/3501 |
| Unique Reference Number | 125705 |

Headteacher Mr Martin Hammond

Description of the school

St Benedict's is a small primary school in the parish of the same name in Atherstone, Warwickshire. There are 161 pupils on roll of whom 123 (76%) are baptised Catholics. The other 24% are from mainly Christian backgrounds. The large majority of pupils are of white British origin. The intake of pupils and their socio-economic background is mixed. Free school meal take-up is below average. 13% of pupils are on the SEN register. There is one pupil with a statement of educational need.

Overall effectiveness of the school

St Benedict's is a very good Catholic school with many excellent features. The leadership of the Catholic life of the school and vision for its future development are very good. There is a strong caring and family atmosphere which establishes a good climate for work. Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in each key stage. Standards attained are high. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and he is very well supported in the direction of the Catholic and academic life of the school by the parish priest, governing body, and by a committed and capable staff, both teaching and non teaching. The Catholic ethos of the school is strong with excellent provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. This is similar to the school's own evaluation of its Catholic life and provision for religious education. Effective action has been taken since the last inspection on areas needing development in RE. The diocesan *Curriculum Strategy for RE* has been fully implemented. Assessment procedures to complement the RE scheme of work have been reviewed and implemented. At the last inspection the headteacher had only recently been appointed. Since then a restructuring of the management system has been implemented. Such is the effectiveness of the present structure of management that RE continues to be effectively led, despite the long term absence of the RE co-ordinator, which has resulted in partial implementation of plans for the monitoring of teaching and learning in RE through lesson observations, book trawls and management reviews. The use of ICT in RE has been extended and is now excellent.

The capacity to improve the Catholic life of the school and RE further is very good. The strong commitment of the headteacher, staff, governors and parish priest to the school is a factor in the maintenance of existing good practices and further development. Priorities for the improvement of RE provision and the Catholic life of the school are derived from the school's own accurate self-evaluation.

What the school should do to improve further

With the school's effective self evaluation and its commitment to self-improvement, there are no significant issues arising from this inspection. However, to enhance existing high quality practices and standards the school should:

- develop procedures for monitoring, assessing and recording the quality of teaching and learning in RE.
- review and simplify the mission statement to ensure that it can be known, understood and lived by all members of the school community
- devise a procedure for assessing the knowledge of RE of pupils entering the reception class
- increase the participation of governors in the life of the school by altering their focus from supportive to supportive and challenging.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

There is clear direction for the spiritual life of the school provided by the headteacher and this is well supported by the parish priest, governors and by all the staff. The leadership of the

headteacher is very good. There is clear direction for the school in its Catholic and academic life and its provision for religious education. The headteacher gives good personal witness to the faith. He has introduced a management structure which defines clear leadership roles and areas of responsibility and which ensures that the Catholic life and ethos of the school drives all aspects of school life. The governing body is aware of its responsibilities towards the Catholic character of the school. Self evaluation is accurate and honest and gives confidence that the school is well aware of its development needs. The relationship between evaluation and improvement planning is secure.

Collective Worship

Provision for collective worship is very good both in respect of frequency and quality and, like all other aspects of the school's Catholic life, is well planned and delivered. Whole school Mass is celebrated weekly. There is a variety of opportunity for prayer and collective worship throughout the school and this contributes significantly to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. There are liturgical responses to major national and world events such as the Tsunami disaster and G8 Summit.

The school Mass during the inspection was extremely well planned and delivered. All pupils participated in a variety of ways: introducing the Mass, leading the readings and bidding prayers and singing hymns. They prayed devoutly, responded clearly and sang with obvious enjoyment. The structured programmes for Sacramental preparation involve the home and school effectively and are well supported by the parish priest. The programmes have enjoyed significant impact on homes and parish. The school's view that collective worship and liturgy are significant strengths of the school is a secure judgement.

Community Cohesion

The school is a predominantly Christian community, within an environment which is purposefully structured, orderly and stimulating. Pupils feel secure, happy and respected. The Catholic life of the school and provision for religious education results in an attitude of respect for each member of the school community. The relationships between staff, parents and pupils are excellent and all are quick to show concern for the well-being of each other. Pupils are clearly aware that they are members of one human family, responsible for one another. They give generously to charity and provide much needed resources for a school in Chintowa in Malawi with which they have regular contact. They are provided with photographic evidence of the need for these resources and how they are being used. Pupils are very happy in school and appreciate the care and concern shown towards them by the adult members of the school community. They are able to express their identity with pride and without fear. Cultural development and knowledge of their faith is enhanced by visits to neighbouring places of worship of other faiths. The curriculum provides opportunities for the study of other faiths. Parents appreciate the high standard of provision for their children's educational, social, spiritual and emotional needs.

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Pupils enter school with varying knowledge of RE. They make very good progress through the school and by the end of Key Stage 2 standards are high. By the end of Key Stage 1 they are achieving well in lessons. Their religious vocabulary is good and they are able to talk confidently about their work in RE. They have an appropriate knowledge of the Bible and their attempts to explain some of the parables of Jesus and to talk about the miracles performed by Jesus are thoughtful and discerning for their age. The good progress made in Key Stage 1 is continued through Key Stage 2. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are able to engage in intelligent discussions about events in the life of Jesus and the relevance of religious education. The quality of their

written work throughout the school is good and shows a good knowledge of the story of Creation, many Old Testament stories, the Annunciation, the role of angels in the Scriptures, and the main events in the life of Jesus.

There are many examples of how pupils can apply their knowledge of scripture to their daily lives. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is clearly rooted in the teachings of Jesus. They have a good knowledge of prayer and are able to write their own meaningful prayers.

Quality of Provision for Religious Education

Teaching and Learning

The inspector agrees with the school that the quality of provision for RE is very good. Teaching is very good overall. The relationship between teacher and pupils in all classes is very good and creates a very good context for learning and good standards of class discussion. Lessons are well prepared and conducted at a pace which maintains pupils' interest and concentration. Excellent use is made of ICT to enhance the delivery of lessons and pupils' participation in tasks set. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. They use a good range of differing teaching styles; they question pupils to develop their thinking skills. Teachers encourage and give realistic praise and the marking of pupils' work is positive and developmental. Pupils are happy, confident learners who are eager to please their teachers. Throughout the school teachers are effectively supported by dedicated and capable classroom assistants.

Curriculum

The curriculum in RE is soundly planned using the diocesan *Curriculum Strategy for RE*. Documentation is clearly organised and presented. The diocesan personal, social and spiritual education programme *All that I Am* is followed in Years 5 and 6. The RE curriculum provides a good range of opportunities meeting the needs, aptitudes and interests of all learners including those with special educational needs. The RE curriculum takes full advantage of opportunities to develop pupils' skills in literacy. The inspector's judgement is that teaching, learning and curriculum are very good. This agrees with the school's own evaluation.

Leadership and Management of Religious Education

The subject leader is on long term absence at present. However, such is the management structure within the school, that responsibility for the subject is shared effectively between the headteacher and teachers. There is clear direction and guidance. The subject is very well resourced and planning is thorough. Procedures for ensuring regular and effective observations of teaching and for assessment, moderation and recording of pupils' work need further development. The school has very good partnerships with parents and parish.