



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

St. Bonaventure's Catholic Primary School  
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DfE Number: 801 3417  
URN: 138465

Headteacher: Mrs Lucille Charles  
Chair of Governors: Mr Jacob Priesner

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**Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

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Date of inspection: 10-11<sup>th</sup> October 2018  
Date of previous inspection: October 2013

Reporting Inspector: Mr J Skivington  
Additional Inspector: Mrs A Fowler

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## Description of school

St Bonaventure's is a larger than average size Catholic primary school with 402 pupils on roll, of whom 71% are baptised Catholics. The school serves the parishes of St. Bonaventure's, Bishopston, and Sacred Heart, Westbury on Trym. Pupils with English as an Additional language (EAL) make up 30% of each cohort. The number of children from minority ethnic groups is below average. The proportion of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) / Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) is 4%, and 7% of children receive the pupil premium.

## Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 1

### This is an outstanding school because:

- The outcomes, the provision, and the leadership and management of Catholic life are overall outstanding. The pupils' care and respect for each other make an excellent contribution to the ethos of the school, particularly in the positive role modelling of the older pupils for the younger children.
- The outcomes, the provision and the leadership and management for religious education (RE) are outstanding. The quality of teaching is consistently good with some outstanding practice and is closely linked to pupils' achievement and progress. The leadership and management of RE in monitoring and planning for improvement is very effective.
- The provision for the prayer life of the school and the pupils' wholehearted response are outstanding as is the effectiveness of the leadership and management in monitoring and evaluating the quality of its prayer life.

### The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is good.

- The school has successfully maintained its high standards since the previous inspection. The areas for development highlighted in that inspection – greater pupil ownership and involvement in collective worship and Catholic life, and better use of assessment to inform teaching – have both been successfully addressed. The former continues to be an ongoing priority led by the chaplaincy group, and the quality and impact of assessment has seen a dramatic improvement. There is a stable senior leadership team, and a teaching staff who are highly committed to the mission of the school. Staff morale is high. All the Parental responses received by the inspector show approval, appreciation, and support for the school

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

- To increase and develop the impact of chaplaincy across the school, enabling almost all pupils, in a planned and systematic way, to lead and contribute to the Catholic Life of the school.
- To build on the already excellent start the school has made in developing the RE curriculum in the light of the new outcomes.

**a) The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school**

- Pupils appreciate, value, and participate in the Catholic life of the school, as expressed in the school's mission statement: 'Striving to be the best we can, guided by the Light of Christ'. They are able to articulate what is special about being in a Catholic school, and how the values the school promotes translate into their behaviour and care for one another. They also link these values back to scripture. They are able to express their opinions on the Catholic life through Pupil Voice and the chaplaincy. The school is seeking to provide even more systematic and planned opportunities for them to be more effectively involved in evaluating Catholic life.
- The pupils' excellent behaviour, conduct and attitudes around the school reflect its Catholic character, and this makes a significant contribution to the whole ethos of the school. Their care for one another, particularly the older pupils for the younger children, is an embedded behaviour and reflects the values inculcated by the school. They value and respect one another, and all feel included in every area of school life.
- They take on positions of responsibility and leadership of Catholic life, and in the local community, through, for example, the chaplaincy team, the school council, prefects, 'buddies', and the Eco team. They live out the mission through their outreach to others in the local community and beyond, through charity work such as CAFOD, the Shoebox Appeal, Children in Need, Borderlands, the Salvation Army, Bristol Homeless, and Crisis Centre ministries. A good number of parents, parishioners and local people support the events organised by the pupils. The links with the parishes are strong and pupils are involved in parish activities
- The chaplaincy team meets regularly, and increasingly takes the lead in the daily prayer life of the school, both in class liturgies and assemblies. It is a learning situation for them as they grow in confidence to take charge of, for example, their own meeting and planning records, and evaluation reviews of their planning and presentations, in order to improve the impact on their listeners. The leadership role now needs to be extended to include other pupils.
- Pupils are happy, well-rounded individuals and well prepared for the next stage of their physical, emotional, and spiritual development. They understand what vocation entails as a steward and a disciple and how this builds the school into a cohesive family and force for good. The pupils were involved in re-visiting the Mission statement through identifying values such as Empathy, Kindness, Integrity, and Love.

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**b) The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- The excellent provision for the Catholic life of the school ensures the school's mission and Catholic ethos are at the centre of all the school does, and this is very evident not only in the environment and the colourful displays in the classrooms, but more widely shared through the parish and on the school's website. God is very evidently at the centre of school life, as witnessed at the daily prayer on the playground at the start of every day where the children are joined by parents and the whole staff.
- St. Bonaventure's is a welcoming and inclusive community where all are valued and invited to participate. As a result, all have a strong sense of belonging to a community that celebrates difference and diversity. This also comes through the pupils multi faith work.
- The Pastoral programme is a real strength of the school, with well planned links between PSHE, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and the Catholic values the school promotes. The Jigsaw Programme has been adapted very successfully to link in with and reflect Catholic values. Very effective pastoral support and care is given to all, especially the vulnerable pupils, and this supports and enables them to thrive.
- The school uses the Relationship and Sex Education programme 'Journey in Love' but this has been adapted to reflect the needs of the school community. This topic is delivered in a sensitive way with pupils being encouraged to reflect on the issues.
- Work within RE is supported by the school's links with the local Catholic partnership.
- The prayer life has been significantly enriched through the Wednesday Word assembly and the increasingly popular Prayer Bags which the children can take home and which encourage the whole family to pray together.

**c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- Leaders and governors are strongly committed to promoting the Catholic ethos of the school as their first priority. They are closely involved in the school. They have successfully ensured that the effectiveness of the school's mission is a real expression of the wider mission of the Church, and for example, have created an attractive brochure with the school's values prominently laid out. They offer excellent models of good practice as leaders of Catholic life, ensuring all parents and children are fully included in the school's life.
- Governors keep themselves up to date with appropriate diocesan training, such as the Foundation Governors courses, and they are aware of the Pastoral Vision for the Diocese – A Future full of Hope. They explored how the Bishop's vision for the

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diocese – ‘A Future full of Hope’ can be lived out by the school community through the Year of Mission and the following Year of Prayer. They ensure that spiritual and moral education are informed by Catholic Social teaching, such as the care for our common home expressed in Pope Francis’ Encyclical ‘Laudato si ‘. The school is open to advice and collaboration with the other partner Catholic schools in the Newman Partnership.

- The quality and frequency of induction and CPD for staff to develop their understanding and commitment to the Church’s and the school’s mission is very effective, with frequent Inset both in school, and with the Newman partnership, on Catholic life and RE. All staff are helped through example and CPD to understand the Catholic nature of the school, and as a result they become fully committed to its mission and are real role models for the children. This training could be developed further to include courses and qualifications such as the CCRS programme.
- The governors monitor the quality of Catholic life very effectively. They visit the school and attend assemblies and liturgies both formally and informally, including random visits. Their evaluation of Catholic life, in terms of the quality and range of opportunities for pupils’ and the staffs’ spiritual and moral development, and their understanding of it, is well informed, systematic, and is fed into improvement planning with measurable objectives. The good links with parents could be more fruitful with fuller communication and more information on the RE topics their children are studying so that they can support and reinforce their learning at home.

#### a) How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Pupils come to the school from varied backgrounds and with different levels of knowledge and understanding. They make a good start in the early years thanks to very effective teaching and a creative use of drama, role play, and art, making good progress for their starting points, so that by the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils have reached the expected standard. This consistently good progress continues in the later years, so that by the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils have made the expected level of progress, with some making better than expected.
- Pupils with special educational needs or with disabilities make similar good progress thanks to the help they receive from very supportive teaching assistants, and planned intervention. There is a need to track different groups of pupils, as well as pupils in parallel classes, more closely, and the school has recognised this in its forward planning.
- There are some impressive examples of reflective writing in different styles both in the pupils' workbooks, but also in the beautifully presented Class Books. Pupils are able to make links between, for example, the story of the conversion of Paul, and what it might mean for them today. Some very thoughtful and reflective work was done on interpreting Michaelangelo's painting of Creation in the Sistine Chapel.
- The extent of pupils' religious literacy develops well as they go through the school, and in discussion they show a good grasp of key concepts. Most pupils enjoy their RE lessons and can learn independently, in pairs, and in groups. They actively seek to improve their knowledge and become competent learners. Their presentation reflects the care and pride they take in their work. There is also a good range and quality of writing. Occasionally the writing in depth is more focused on outcomes for English rather than RE

#### b) The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching is consistently good, with some outstanding practice observed during the inspection. This promotes learning as well as the enjoyment and progress of the pupils. Teachers use a good range of strategies including art, music, drama and role play which the pupils enjoy, and which helps them to learn.
- Where teaching is at its best, questioning is strong checking understanding, challenging pupils to think more deeply and provide reasons for their opinions. The pace of the lesson promotes learning and attention is clearly paid to the development of critical thinking.

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- The school is well aware of the varying extent of teachers' mastery of the subject, and it is a developmental objective with Inset both in the school and across the Newman group.
  - The marking policy is well embedded and generally effective in directing pupils' learning, especially where the quality of the teachers' comments are challenging, and where the pupils' responses indicate a deepening understanding. The teachers' feedback ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
  - Data is linked back to pupils' individual work so there can be a high degree of confidence that the data produced is accurate

**c) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education**

- The evaluation of RE provision is an area of leadership and management which is highly effective and the driver of improvement. Leaders and governors monitor and track RE through lesson observations and book scrutiny, and the systems have dramatically improved in terms of rigour and challenge. The governors carry out the Annual Governors' Monitoring and Evaluation Programme (AGMEP) throughout the year.
- The inspirational RE subject leader, is an excellent supportive role model for the teachers in developing their subject knowledge and practice. All aspects of the subject are thoroughly planned in frequent staff meetings and Inset, and swift action taken where needed, often the result of a detailed review of the curriculum modules. The RE planning is drawn up in a detailed working document with clear, measurable objectives. Together with the positive support provided through diocesan training and collaboration with the other RE leaders in the Newman hub, teachers new to the subject are rapidly up-skilled with steady success.
- The RE curriculum meets the Bishops' Conference requirements, however there is a need to review the curriculum to ensure it is fully reflective of the Curriculum Directory for RE. The time allocated to RE should certainly not fall below the present allocation, in order to meet Bishops' Conference requirements and any future directives. Extra curricular enrichment is in place through visits, retreats, multi faith days, and the many charity and outreach activities.
- Leaders and governors take into account the views of parents and pupils in evaluating RE through questionnaires and conferencing. Parents are very positive in their feedback to the school and could become even more involved in decision making and partnership. There were 110 replies to the inspection parental questionnaire, an indication of their approval, gratitude and close interest in what the governors and leadership are providing for their children; as well as requests for more information about the RE topics their children are covering so that they too can play a supportive part in their education.

**a) How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's prayer life**

- Every pupil regardless of faith background feels welcome to participate fully in the school's prayer life and collective worship. The pupils show a willingness to play a part in assemblies and whole school celebrations. Some of the assemblies observed during the inspection were planned and led by the chaplaincy and older pupils. The school is building on this chaplaincy modelling, so that in time all the children can become equally confident in planning, preparing, and leading worship, starting in their own class assemblies. This is already beginning to happen as they begin to move from a predictable structure of Q&A followed by bidding prayers, to a more colourful, reflective, and uplifting experience. The Leaders in Faith programme has been taken up by many pupils and this encourages their greater involvement.
- There are useful planning sheets to guide the pupils in their worship preparation, and these could now include reviews and evaluations of their efforts and suggested improvement. The 'even better if' self evaluation is an excellent strategy and to be encouraged and embedded more securely. The prayer chairs in the classrooms and the prayer bags are further enrichment activities and attractive to the children in developing their spiritual life.
- The prayer life of the school contributes significantly to the spiritual and moral development of the children. As pupils move through the school there is a corresponding progression in prayer, including the traditional Catholic prayers, and an understanding of the structure of the Mass as well as the liturgical year. The school needs to make sure all assemblies have an opportunity for spiritual development and that the layout of the hall and the use of signs and symbols reflect this.
- The prayer areas in each class are an attractive, reflective focus for daily prayer and have examples of the pupils' own prayers and poems, including the very insightful reflections in the Class books. The pupils themselves could be invited to monitor and evaluate the prayer tables and artefacts, so that they, for example, reflect the changes throughout the liturgical year. The displays around the corridors are appropriate but somewhat muted, and not always overtly tied to the mission of the school.
- The parish priest is a frequent presence to the whole school community, collaborating with the RE coordinator in planning the liturgical programme, and there are fruitful links between parish and school. The adjoining church is an ideal resource for the pupils and an alternative venue for their special assemblies and liturgies.

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**b) The quality of the prayer life provided by the school**

- The provision for the prayer life of the school makes an outstanding contribution to the spiritual life of the whole school community, and part and parcel of every school day. The outside St. Francis Prayer Garden is a well used area for quiet reflection and prayer.
- The centrality of prayer life reaches out to all pupils, regardless of faith or family background, and includes both staff and parents. Significant moments, such as Harvest, Remembrance Day, Advent and Lent, and traditional Catholic practices, are celebrated as a whole community and are well supported by parents and parish. The pupils in Years 6 have the opportunity to go on retreat to Kintbury, and other shared days with their peers in the Newman Hub.
- The use of Makaton with its use of signs and symbols helps to ensure prayer is inclusive and even the youngest pupils can take part.

**c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the prayer life of the school.**

- Leaders and governors sustain and nurture the prayer life of the school community well and ensure provision and opportunities for prayer and collective worship are in place. There are planned procedures to monitor, evaluate, and further enrich prayer life, and there is ample written evidence of systematic appraisal, review and evaluation in documentation such as the governors' Standards Committee minutes, and the subsequent school improvement plans.
- The spirituality of the staff is well supported through days of training and reflection. They are also beginning to be supported in planning for worship and so becoming more knowledgeable about the liturgical rhythm of the Church. There is further need for this training, not least because as teachers become more confident in modelling high quality inspirational presentations they will have the confidence to hand over planning and presentation to the pupils themselves.

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## Summary of Parental Questionnaires

*There were a 110 parental questionnaires received. All were very positive about the school and their children's education, but also challenging and ready to suggest positive improvements. Some typical responses included:*

***'The positive Catholic ethos of St. Bon's is second to none...and the positive community links. There is a caring ethos about the school. Children look out for each other and emerge with a stronger sense of self'.***

***'We completely understand the safeguarding changes but they make the school feel a bit closed'.***

***'The morning prayer on the playground before school is a lovely start to the day for parents and pupils. A friend who is not religious commented on how inclusive it was to see everyone signing the prayer'.***

***'The community makes this school special, a truly welcoming place.... feeling part of a family with clear links to the two parishes it serves. RE is taught in an accessible way. I am always taken aback with how much my 6-year-old has taken in and absorbed'.***

***'Communication between school and parents with regard to curriculum/topics/homework could be improved... the staff all work really hard and some new IT systems may make this easier for them'.***

***'It is a very inclusive school and a real mix of cultures and faiths. I hope this mix is not lost with the new diocesan admissions policy'.***

***'The school includes us parents in our child's education. Teachers are welcoming and approachable. The PTFA and the class reps do a grand job'.***

***'The spiritual life and ethos of the school is very strong and a real highlight'.***

***'We chose St.Bon's because it is a Catholic school with a good reputation, but also because it is very international with lots of foreign families, and this fosters a great community sense. Everyone is valued and welcome'.***