



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST BEDE'S CATHOLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL REDDITCH

Inspection dates	6 th – 7 th June 2013
Reporting Inspector	John Lally
Assisting Inspector	Brenda Beale

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	9-13 years
Number on roll	589
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mrs Patricia Dean
School address	Holloway Lane Redditch Worcs B98 7HA
Telephone number	01527.525916
E-mail address	office@st-bedes.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	July 2010
DFE School number	855/5401
Unique Reference Number	116998

Headteacher	Mr Paul Heery
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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of Catholic life and religious education (RE). To validate the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspectors observed 7 RE lessons, two with the headteacher or the subject leader. In addition the inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. They held meetings with the chair of governors and the RE link governor, senior staff, the chaplain and lay chaplain. They observed a Mass, class worship and a Key Stage 2 assembly. They looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the development plan, and a departmental review. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspectors gathered evidence about an aspect of sex and relationship education, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

St Bede's Catholic Middle School serves parishes in Redditch and Bromsgrove in north east Worcestershire. The proportion of baptised Catholic pupils is currently 64%, approximately the same as at the last inspection though the proportion in Key Stage 2 is significantly lower. The pupils are mainly of White British heritage but the numbers from ethnic minority households are now slightly above the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average and those having special needs and/or disabilities slightly higher than average. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average, except in mathematics. Since the last inspection a new headteacher, deputy headteacher and RE subject leader have been appointed.

Main Finding

In its self evaluation the St Bede's judges itself to be a good Catholic school in which the leadership of the Catholic life by the senior team and governors is good, collective worship is good with pupils having opportunities to lead and organise liturgy and worship, and teaching is good and sometimes outstanding leading to high attainment in religious education. In the context of a school which is in transition, significant progress has been made and the judgements are accurate and substantially reliable. Processes for monitoring and evaluation are being established and, in recognition of needs in this area, external support has been brought in for RE and collective worship. Priorities for the further development of Catholic life and RE are appropriate and plans are being successfully implemented.

School Self Evaluation

While the school's summative evaluation provides an accurate descriptive analysis of the Catholic life and RE and a thorough analysis of pupils' attainment in the subject, it does not give much attention to the monitoring and evaluation processes which underpin it. However, it is evident that formal procedures are being developed and are already proving effective, as, for example, with collective worship where a weakness in form prayer was identified and measures to improve this were put in place. As well as a revision of the school prayer book, an increase in the time for the lay chaplain, full support for school Masses by the headteacher and senior team, and greater opportunities for pupil leadership, a period of reflection at the end of the school day has been established. These together are proving effective and are receiving a positive response from pupils. Pupils are also involved in evaluation of collective worship provision: a prayer monitor group has been set up and they have undertaken an evaluation of the prayer focuses which are a recent innovation in all classrooms, making useful suggestions which have been implemented. Feedback on the Catholic life and worship are also provided by the staff chaplaincy group, the chaplain, and through the headteacher's meetings with class groups each term.

At present, as the school acknowledges, the monitoring of the Catholic life is not scheduled in the same way that subjects are. Nonetheless, the basis for a more systematic approach has been established. There is an acceptance across the school of the importance of evaluation, procedures

which have been adopted are appropriate and, as the improvement planning takes effect, it will be possible to monitor and evaluate its impact. Spiritual, moral and vocational development is only indirectly monitored as part of liturgy and collective worship but not as elements of a Catholic curriculum integral to all subjects.

Improvement planning is centred on the vision statement for St Bede's as a Catholic school and informed in its detail by the evaluation that the headteacher carried out in his first year in the school. Its priorities are appropriate and realistic. In relation to the Catholicity of the school the intended outcomes are broadly stated, largely in terms of being judged in inspection to be good. These targets have been achieved and opportunities are opened for more specific success criteria to be identified.

Religious education is scheduled to be monitored and evaluated alongside other curriculum subjects embracing lesson observations, work scrutiny, data analysis, and discussions with the subject leader. In addition to this formal monitoring, there are other short informal "drop-in" observations by the headteacher aimed at securing an overall impression over time to back up the one time annual formal process. In the current year, being the first with a new subject leader, in addition to the data analysis of attainment in RE, the school decided to invite the Diocesan Education Service to carry out the monitoring. This review identified three development needs for RE: revision of the curriculum to produce a whole school plan and to provide greater challenge to pupils especially in Key Stage 2; the setting of work differentiated to match pupils' abilities; and greater understanding and use of the national levels of attainment in assessing pupils' work. Since the review action has been taken to address these recommendations, though differentiated work is still rarely evident either in pupils' books or in lessons. Curriculum change in Key Stage 2 is in hand, but it is too early to see outcomes following the departmental review. Changes have been implemented to the curriculum over a longer period in respect of the introduction of the study of other religions. The balance between Catholic RE and other faiths is broadly sound except in Year 8 where the study of Judaism and the Holocaust limits significantly the Catholic Christian curriculum. The balance, too, in the treatment of the four areas of the Curriculum Directory is uneven with less attention given to Life in Christ than to Revelation and Celebration and opportunities for exploring meaning and purpose are not consistently built in to provision.

Judgements made by the school about the quality of teaching in RE are accurate and reflect action that has been taken since the last inspection when teaching in Key Stage 2 was less good than that in Key Stage 3 and was judged by inspectors to be satisfactory. Outcomes in Key Stage 2 are now good with pupils making good progress and the quality of teaching is good. This has been achieved by limiting the teaching of RE to a few Catholic teachers, by work on pedagogy with the staff as a whole, and by ensuring that the teachers are good at teaching RE and not just good general teachers. While the headteacher has brought in greater understanding of pedagogy and up-to-date knowledge of pupil learning, evaluation of progress in learning in RE is limited with the major focus resting on progress in attainment. Despite this the guidance to pupils on how to improve their work is generally good, but the balance of evaluation should be redressed to give greater focus on learning. Assessment of pupils' work is largely accurate as is the school's judgement that attainment in RE is high. Recording of pupils' achievement has developed, but judgements based on levels of attainment require a wider range of evidence of achievement than the three annual assessments currently employed.

Priorities and actions in the RE improvement plan are appropriate to the development needs of the department and are consistent with the findings of the DES review. Planning does not specify the stages or success criteria for longer term targets such as the revision of the curriculum and it is consequently unclear how the evaluation of progress in achieving them is to take place.

Governor involvement in monitoring and evaluating the Catholicity of the school and religious education is good. The governors are well aware of the current state of the Catholic life of the school as a result of their visits, involvement in monitoring and headteacher's reports. They have a strong commitment to the school as a Catholic school and to religious education and are determined that it should continue to lead the development of the school. They contribute very well to leadership, monitoring and evaluation. The headteacher provides governors with good

information and there is a community of purpose amongst the leadership of the school reflecting a school which is increasingly a community of faith. The school's judgement that leadership is good is legitimate though there is some way to go before the full impact of recent changes is known and until evaluation systems are fully in place. The headteacher has a strong presence in the school and a clear vision of what is to be accomplished to move St Bede's towards being an outstanding middle school.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes from religious education are good with many pupils by the end of Years 6 and 8 achieving above expectations with little evidence of any difference in attainment of different groups within the school. In most classes pupils write well using different genres and make consistent progress through the year. That this is achieved without work being differentiated to meet the needs of lower ability pupils indicates that they could potentially make even better progress. Pupils engage very well with the subject and profess their enjoyment of it readily. Their excellent behaviour promotes good and better learning and contributes greatly to the Catholic life of the school.

Pupils respond very well to the range of opportunities which the school provides for them in relation to the Catholic life. They participate willingly and accept responsibilities for leading worship in assemblies and form time as well as in Masses, singing in Masses with enthusiasm. The introduction this year of a period for reflection in forms at the end of the day is improving both the quality of prayer and the involvement of the tutors with their classes. Pupils involved in the chaplaincy and the prayer monitor groups benefit well from their activities and contribute much to the school. The pupils engage with charitable action with understanding and a new St Vincent de Paul group has joined with the nearby parish in carrying out charitable work. Their attitude to the Catholicity of the school is positive and they embrace the inclusive nature of the school exceedingly well, respecting each other as individuals. They are key to the school's spirit of communion. Pupils are open and welcoming, have a good sense of right and wrong and the importance of forgiveness. Parents too are supportive of the Catholic life of the school.

Leadership of the Catholic life of the school is good with clear potential to be outstanding at senior level. Leaders demonstrate a wide range of effective activity to support the Catholic life of the school which has developed well since the last inspection. Governors hold leaders to account for both Catholic life and RE and all are committed to the mission of the school which has been reinforced by a revised vision statement rooted in that mission. The impact of the work of the school's leaders is evident in the engagement of the pupils, their inclusiveness, and the progress that they make not only in RE but across the curriculum. In all that leaders do, the staff are very supportive and there are particularly valuable contributions to the Catholicity of the school from the chaplain and lay chaplain, head of music, all staff who contribute to the chaplaincy group, and a member of the administrative staff who liaises with the parish. Leadership of RE is in the care of a newly appointed head of subject. She is very keen to learn, has sought advice from an outstanding Catholic school in the same county as well as from the diocese. She has identified the development needs of the department accurately. She is supported by the head of faculty who served for long as head of religious education in the school.

Teaching overall is good and sometimes outstanding and this is reflected in the high attainment of the pupils as well as their engagement with and enjoyment of the subject. Lessons are well structured with opportunities provided for pupils to learn and to communicate their learning in different ways. In most classes teachers enable pupils to produce structured writing in different genres so that they are able to explore and develop their understanding with a degree of independence. The school's acknowledged strengths in English are well supported and fostered in RE. Pupils value the discussion which takes place in lessons and that they are able to form and express their own viewpoints. This is done without compromising the principles of Catholic teaching which staff are seeking to develop.

¹ As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform largely to those of the school.

The school acknowledges that the curriculum is satisfactory overall, because, although it provides a framework for good teaching leading to good outcomes, further development of schemes of work is necessary to embed progression and consistency. Enrichment for the Catholic curriculum is good through the school focus across the curriculum on competences which are linked to Catholic values and through a range of other activities such as provision of the *Wednesday Word* or a visit from the Ten Ten Theatre Company to support sex and relationship education. SRE is particularly well done in the school with its long established focus on the story of life from conception to birth, an activity which encourages pupils to talk to their parents about their own development which they can then share in the classroom.

Given the short time since senior leaders and head of RE were appointed and subsequent restructuring of the staff into faculties, good progress has been made particularly in Catholic life and religious education in Key Stage 2 while the good quality of RE in Key Sage 3 has been well maintained.

Recommendations

- Establish more systematic processes for evaluating the Catholic life of the school.
- Provide training in departmental leadership and evaluation for the new head of RE.
- Give clear priority to the development, progression, and balance of the curriculum in RE across the school
- Consider the ways in which subjects across the curriculum contribute to the spiritual, moral and vocational development of the pupils.