



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST BEDE'S CATHOLIC INFANTS SCHOOL

WIDNES

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| Inspection Date | 21 st November 2019 |
| Inspectors | Mrs. Denise Hegarty, Mrs. Maureen Hillsdon |
| Unique Reference Number | 111372 |
| Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011 | |

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| Type of School | Catholic Infants |
| Age range of pupils | 5 - 7 |
| Number on roll | 240 |
| Chair of Governors | Mrs. Margaret Rowlands |
| Headteacher | Miss Jackie Coughlan |
| School address | Leigh Avenue Appleton Village Widnes Cheshire |
| Telephone number | 0151 424 3112 |
| E-mail address | head.stbedesinfants@halton.gov.uk |
| Date of last inspection | 4 th November 2014 |

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Team and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about this school

- St Bede's School is an average sized Catholic infant school situated in Widnes in the Halton area of the Archdiocese and serves the parish of St Wilfrid, Widnes.
- There are 240 children on roll of whom 228 are baptised Catholic, 4 come from other Christian denominations and 7 have no religious affiliation. There is 1 pupil from another faith or religious tradition at the school.
- There are twelve teachers at the school, nine of whom are baptised Catholic. Nine teachers teach Religious Education. Ten teachers have a suitable qualification in Religious Education and two are undertaking the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.

Key for inspection grades

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| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Requires Improvement |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

St. Bede's Infant school is outstanding in providing Catholic Education.

CATHOLIC LIFE

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

- The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.
- They join the school from a wide range of pre-school experiences and respond very well to the structure and guidance provided by the school. They make outstanding progress in their understanding of and respect for the school's Catholic traditions and embrace its ethos.
- Pupils appreciate, value and wholeheartedly participate in the Catholic Life and mission of the school. They understand their mission, 'Learn to love; love to learn' and strive to implement it in their day to day lives. They look up to their teachers and as one child put it, "Teachers are kind to us. They use kind hands, kind feet and kind words."
- Pupils review their own Mission Statement and school prayer annually and are heavily involved in evaluating it and planning improvements.
- They show a respect for themselves and others as made in the image and likeness of God and recognise that each of them is a unique human being. They celebrate difference and value diversity.
- The behaviour of most pupils is outstanding all the time. This is reflected in their relationships with each other, the adults in school and all members of the school community. They are respectful and show a clear understanding of the need to forgive, be forgiven and have a very good understanding of right and wrong. They value each other and acknowledge their rights and responsibilities towards each other. They enjoy celebrating each other's achievements.
- Pupils are proud of their school and have a strong sense of belonging to their Catholic school community. One child commented, "Our school is a special place where everyone learns, has fun, works together and plays. We are like a family."
- Pupils are very keen to take on the responsibilities that living within the community entails. As a result, they are regularly involved with those activities which promote the Catholic Life and mission of the school both within school and the wider community e.g. as school councillors, eco ambassadors and play leaders.
- They are alert to the needs of others, show high levels of concern for those not as well off as they are and seek justice for others within and beyond the school community. Pupils understand the reasons for acting justly, being forgiving and serving others. They are very involved in fundraising for many worthwhile causes and are linked to several charities. These include Cafod, Macmillan Cancer Support, charities for the homeless and Diabetes UK. They fill shoeboxes with gifts for Operation Christmas Child and collect food for the local foodbank. The choir have sung Christmas carols and songs at the local Walk in Centre and shopping centre to promote the message and spirit of Christmas.
- Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities provided to support their pastoral needs, personal support and development. They know who to approach if they have any concerns and they know that their concerns are heard and acted upon. As a result, they are happy, confident and secure.

- Pupils readily embrace and benefit from the many opportunities they are given to appreciate other cultures and religions through, for example, the school's rich curriculum, visits, visitors into school and extra-curricular activities including multi-cultural sports.
- Pupils, appropriate to their age and capability, have an excellent understanding of loving relationships. They are fully prepared for the next stage of their physical, emotional and spiritual development.
- Pupils embrace a holistic approach to education, understand what it means to have a vocation and joyfully offer their gifts in the service of others. They thrive in the positive, encouraging ethos that exist here. A range of steering groups meet regularly to organise, plan and lead events that contribute to the Catholic character of the school. These groups include Prayer and Spirituality group, the school council, antibullying ambassadors etc. Pupils undertake the roles they play responsibly and seriously. They take their class members views into consideration and report decisions back to them.
- Pupils value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and its links with the parish community and the Archdiocese. Members of the parish are regularly invited to celebrations, festivities and services. As a result, they respect and are involved with parish and diocesan celebrations and activities, irrespective of their own faith commitments.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.
- The school Mission Statement clearly expresses the educational mission of the Church. It reflects gospel values and is at the heart of school life. It was produced through consultation with the whole school community and is reviewed with staff, governors, members of the wider community and parents and carers at the school's Community Saturday event each summer term. It is displayed prominently throughout the school and is included on all documentation and the school website.
- Staff are fully committed to its implementation across the curriculum and all aspects of school life. They are proud members of the school community that actively participate in school activities which reflect the Catholic Life and mission of the school, such as, retreats, staff prayer, Continuous Professional Development on Catholic Life.
- An annual review of the curriculum takes place to ensure it retains its distinctive Catholic character. The whole curriculum reflects a strong commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, to care for our common home and to the dignity of every human person. Children are encouraged and enabled to develop a sense of awe and wonder. There are many opportunities given for pupils to consider, discuss and explore ethical and global issues. The school has achieved an International Schools' Award, a Global Awareness Award, a Unicef Rights Respecting School Award and a Fairtrade Fair Achiever Award.
- The distinctive ethos of the school and the values from the gospel are embedded into every aspect of school life. There is a strong sense of community at all levels, evident in the quality of positive, supportive relationships and the centrality of prayer to the whole community. A member of staff said, "This school is a very strong community – a true family which has high expectations, but supports and nurtures all members to enable this to happen. The mission of the school is lived out daily in the words, actions and deeds of all. No school could ask for a more visionary and supportive headteacher and board of governors."
- The school's inspirational environment is welcoming, vibrant and exciting. Its Catholic ethos and identity is visibly reflected through the quality and significance of displays, devotional areas and beautiful artefacts throughout the school.
- Staff promote high standards of behaviour and are outstanding role models of mutual respect and forgiveness for pupils.

- The school provides many opportunities for the physical, spiritual, moral emotional development of pupils. These include Sunbeams (a programme for children who are affected by loss), Silver Seal (early intervention for pupils with social and emotional difficulties), extra-curricular clubs (such as, homework club, exercise, gardening, arts) as well as weeks dedicated to spirituality, health and well-being. Throughout the curriculum, children are invited to think deeply about moral questions and reflect on the benefits of making good choices. Theme weeks, e.g. Arts, Awe and Wonder week and Emotional Health and Well-being week impact greatly on children's development and culminate with a day with parents and carers to share the experience and seek their views.
- The link priest from the parish has visited the school throughout the year to support and promote the Catholic Life of the school.
- Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Policies and structures are in place, which provide excellent pastoral care to pupils, and there is a commitment to the most vulnerable and needy in both policy and practice. Needs are identified early and appropriate support provided for staff and children alike. Pupils participate in an Emotional Health and Well-being week which includes opportunities for making home school links.
- Staff have participated in relaxation sessions to support their well-being. Two mental health first-aiders have been appointed and one leads an Emotional Health and Well-being club.
- Pastoral programmes, Personal, Social and Health Education and Relationships and Sex Education are planned, well taught and reflect Catholic teachings and principles. Parents are consulted annually on the *Journey in Love* programme at the annual Arts, Awe and Wonder Saturday and at Year Group curriculum meetings. The Relationship and Sex Education map is available to be viewed on the school website.

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

- Leaders and governors are outstanding in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- Leaders and governors demonstrate a total commitment to the mission of the Church. They are well regarded as models of Catholic leadership by both staff and pupils. The development of the Catholic Life of the school is viewed by leaders and governors as a core leadership responsibility.
- This is a joyful, happy community where leaders are committed to running an equitable and inclusive school in which all are welcomed and feel loved, respected and valued.
- The provision for the Catholic Life of the school is given high priority by leaders. This is reflected in the school's accurate self-evaluation which involves rigorous monitoring, analysis and self-challenge and is clearly focused on the Catholic Life of the school and its Mission Statement.
- This leads to well-targeted and planned improvements to further enhance the Catholic Life of the school.
- The school places high value on Continuous Professional Development and provides excellent training focusing on the Catholic Life of the school. All teachers have been awarded the *Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies* or are currently in the process of achieving it. As a result, staff understanding of the school's mission is outstanding and they are involved in shaping and supporting it.
- The headteacher attends Archdiocesan meetings and the Religious Education co-ordinator attends briefings and local cluster meetings. Information is always cascaded to staff and any initiatives implemented quickly.

- Links between the home and school are very strong with highly successful strategies in place to engage with parents and carers to the benefit of pupils, including those who might traditionally find working with the school difficult. These include induction meetings, open occasions, curriculum meetings, newsletters, community days and the school website. Parents views are sought, valued and acted on. As a result, parents and carers have an excellent understanding of the school's mission and are very supportive of it.
- There are very close links between the school and the local parish community.
- The governing body leads by example in the way it emphasises Catholic Life as a school improvement priority. Governors make a significant contribution to the Catholic Life of the school. They are loyal to the school's mission, are involved in its evaluation and are ready to challenge as well as support where necessary. They are keen to keep well-informed of progress and impact of actions for areas identified in self-evaluation processes. Governors also engage in an annual learning walk and a staff and governor forum. The school's successes are shared and celebrated and any future areas for development are discussed.
- Governors have access to Archdiocesan training and development and attend school in-service sessions when relevant. They consistently hold training sessions, often linked to the Catholic Life of the school, before full governing body meetings.
- The school has achieved a Pupil Voice Award for the way they consult, consider and act on pupils' views and opinions. Governors work with the school councillors to produce pupil questionnaires to facilitate this process. Feedback from children's steering groups and any requests they have is a standing item on the agenda of the termly governors' premises committee.
- Leaders and governors respond well to Archdiocesan policies and initiatives and promotes the Archdiocesan vision throughout the school. They participate in Archdiocesan events e.g. by responding to questions during the Synod 2020 process and creating proposals for action. The headteacher is an associate inspector, a facilitator on the Catholic Middle Leader Programme, a member of SACRE and mentors new local Catholic headteachers.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- The extent to which pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding.
- Pupils, from their varied starting points at a wide range of pre-school experiences, make excellent progress across the school. They rise to challenges, persevere and want to do their best.
- Groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are also making progress comparable to the progress of other pupils.
- All groups have highly positive attitudes to their work. Pupils, relative to their age and capacity, are becoming religiously literate and engaged children who use their knowledge, understanding and skills, to reflect spiritually, and to think ethically and theologically. Consequently, pupils are becoming aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. They listen attentively, are able to talk and ask questions about their work and explain their understanding.
- Pupils are actively engaged in lessons and are committed to improving their knowledge, understanding and skills, in order to further develop as competent learners.

- Pupils concentrate very well, remain on task, understand how well they are doing and can articulate how they have made progress.
- Pupils approach their lessons with interest, enthusiasm and often excitement. They thoroughly enjoy the variety of challenging activities provided, and respond well to opportunities which extend their learning. Behaviour in lessons is outstanding because pupils 'love' Religious Education and any disruptions in lessons are unusual. Pupils are polite to each other and collaborate very well together.
- Pupils' attainment, as indicated by teacher and formal assessments, is outstanding. Pupils achieve at least average attainment with most achieving higher. This has been sustained over time.
- The quality of pupils' current work, both in class and in written work, is outstanding. They take great pride in their work books and are happy to talk about their work and share it with others.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.
- Teachers consistently plan exceptionally well collaboratively and in great detail. This supports continuity and progression. Lessons are linked to pupils' current assessment and teachers consistently recap on previous work to build on it and consolidate it so that pupils learn well. As a result of this, teaching is mainly outstanding.
- Planning takes careful account of children's age and stage of development. Learning activities are differentiated through use of the 'driver words' from the *Draft Standards of Attainment in Religious Education*. Many cross-curricular links are made.
- Teachers are confident in their delivery and have excellent subject expertise. They have an excellent understanding of how pupils learn and consequently, pupils apply themselves very well and make outstanding progress in lessons and over time.
- Teachers use *Come and See for Yourself* in preparation for each new theme from the programme.
- Teachers have the best interests of their pupils at heart and strive to inspire pupils, engage their interest and motivate them to learn. In doing so, they employ a range of challenging strategies, including individual and collaborative work. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to develop a sense of curiosity and awe and wonder. Consequently, pupils are highly motivated and sustain concentration in lessons.
- Teachers manage time well to maximise learning in lessons and across sequences of lessons. Pace is swift.
- Teachers use observation and questioning very well during lessons in order to adapt tasks and explanations, so improving learning significantly for pupils.
- High quality resources, including other adults are used effectively to optimise learning for pupils. Relationships in all classes are very positive. Additional adults are deployed very effectively and work as a team with teachers to support, enrich and enhance pupils' learning. In many classes, excellent use was made of 'talking partners' to share ideas and information.
- A positive climate for learning permeates throughout the school. Teachers communicate high expectations about Religious Education to their pupils, all of whom respond positively. They ensure pupils are involved in evaluating how well they are achieving. This contributes to outstanding progress and increases their confidence in making further improvements.
- High quality feedback leads to the engagement, interest, achievement and progress of pupils. Teachers assess pupils' work carefully with reference to lesson objectives and standards of attainment. Assessment logs are kept and provide useful evidence of achievement and progress across time. Ongoing and summative assessment are used effectively throughout the school to evaluate children's progress and inform future planning.

- Teachers celebrate achievement and effort leading to excellent levels of motivation from pupils. Children have opportunities to share their learning with peers and adults. Parents are asked to support their children's learning by talking about topics and sending in artefacts, photographs etc. One parent commented, "I feel the school teaches good, strong values through Religious Education and the involvement of parents is spot on."

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- Leaders and governors are outstanding in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for Religious Education.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect across the school. School development priorities, produced in consultation with the whole school community, are linked to national and archdiocesan priorities, performance management targets and analysis of data.
- Leaders and governors ensure that at least the required amount of curriculum time is given to Religious Education in each key stage.
- It is clear that Religious Education is considered to be the core subject in the school. Leaders and governors ensure that it is comparable to other core curriculum subjects, in terms of professional development, resourcing, staffing and accommodation.
- Leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education is planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils and to secure coherence across the school.
- Any additional requirements and policies of the Archdiocese regarding the Religious Education curriculum are fully implemented.
- Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation of Religious Education is an accurate reflection of frequent assessment, tracking, monitoring, analysis and self-challenge which is informed by current best practice in Religious Education. This results in strategic action taken by the school which leads to at least excellent outcomes in Religious Education.
- A rigorous monitoring and evaluation schedule is in place for the subject and any priorities for improvement are fed back and acted upon. Good practice is celebrated and shared.
- Moderation of children's work is regularly undertaken as a whole school activity. This ensures consistency in standards across the school. Effective procedures for tracking pupils' progress have been established. Children's progress is analysed so staffing and resources can thus be deployed effectively to enable each child to achieve their potential.
- The Religious Education co-ordinator continues to provide strong and inspirational leadership for the subject. She leads by example, has a clear vision for teaching and learning and a high level of expertise in securing this vision. These are used outstandingly to improve teaching and learning in Religious Education, resulting in teaching that is likely to be at least consistently very good to outstanding. She has produced excellent documentation to guide and direct staff in their delivery of the subject.
- The link priest from the parish of St Wilfrid's visits the school regularly and the children enjoy working with him in their Religious Education lessons.
- Governors are informed of the results of monitoring and evaluation through the headteacher's reports and the co-ordinators' reports to the curriculum committee. The link governor works closely in support of the subject co-ordinator.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship

- Pupils' response to and participation in the school's Collective Worship is outstanding.
- Pupils listen and respond with reverence and are keen to participate in Collective Worship. They sing joyfully and enthusiastically, reflect purposefully in silence and join in community prayer appropriately and confidently. Pupils value their times of prayer together and are very willing participants.
- Pupils regularly prepare and lead aspects of worship with confidence and enthusiasm in an age appropriate manner. They are thoughtful in their planning. The new prayer and spirituality group has started to take a leading role in prayer leadership across the school both in class and school groupings. Pupils from each class plan and deliver a Collective Worship for parents and carers each term. They choose scripture, hymns and prayers to celebrate worship and take roles of responsibility by, for example, selecting artefacts and setting up the focal area, role playing the chosen scripture or leading prayer.
- Pupils use a variety of approaches to prayer which includes scripture, religious artefacts, liturgical music and other forms of prayer both traditional and contemporary with increasing confidence. Children engage in formal and informal prayers throughout each school day. As they progress through the school, they are able to compose their own prayers to include in worship.
- Pupils participate in and lead a number of celebrations throughout the year to which members of the local community are invited. These include Nativity and Epiphany celebrations, Ash Wednesday services and Holy Week reflections.
- Pupils have an age appropriate understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons and feasts and the approaches this requires in the planning of appropriate worship opportunities.
- The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community has a profound and visible impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils, irrespective of ability or faith background. They have a well-developed sense of respect for those of other faiths. This is reflected in the way pupils participate in prayer and liturgy.
- Through Collective Worship, pupils reflect on ethical and moral issues. They have a well-developed sense of right and wrong and are able to reflect on the consequences of their actions. They understand God loves them as unique individuals and consequently demonstrate compassion, tolerance and forgiveness towards each other.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding.
- Collective Worship is part of the life of the school and prayer is included in all school celebrations. Praying together is part of the daily experience for pupils and staff. The centrality of prayer to the whole community is very evident.
- Collective Worship has a clear purpose, message and direction. The themes chosen for worship reflect an excellent understanding of the liturgical seasons and fully reflect the Catholic character of the school. They play a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of the community.
- Collective Worship is given a high priority in terms of planning, evaluating and resourcing; as a result, experience of Collective Worship is engaging, and all members of the community speak positively about these opportunities. High quality, plentiful resources are deployed to enhance worship.
- The headteacher, and all teachers are visible leaders of Collective Worship within school, leading whole school, year group or class-based Collective Worship. They are highly skilled

and confident in their planning, leadership and evaluation of Collective Worship and in helping pupils to plan and deliver quality worship as appropriate. They have a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the purpose of Collective Worship and the wide variety of methods and styles of prayer.

- A range of experiences are provided in various settings including the school garden which is currently being refurbished. In all cases, a calm spiritual atmosphere is created that is conducive to worship.
- Relevant staff have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts and ensure that pupils have wonderful experiences of the Church's liturgical life. Links to Cafod resources, the *Come and See* topics and to local and national events fully reflect the Church's mission.
- Excellent opportunities are planned in a manner that facilitates attendance by other adults associated with the pupils and school including a whole school Holy Week reflection and a 'Celebration of Mary'. Parents and carers are invited to join children's class in prayer and worship each term at the Rejoice stage in the *Come and See* programme. Response to these invitations is excellent with positive feedback given by adults attending.

How well leaders, governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship

- Leaders and governors are outstanding in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for Collective Worship.
- Staff and governors regularly pray together and all meetings begin with prayer.
- A comprehensive policy and guidelines have been developed and teachers know how these help them to plan and deliver excellent Collective Worship.
- Continuing professional development of staff incorporating liturgical formation and planning is a high priority in improvement planning and has been delivered regularly over time to ensure provision is of the highest quality.
- Leaders and governors have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts and make these accessible to the pupils in a contemporary and age appropriate context.
- All leaders of Collective Worship within the school are outstanding models of practice for staff and pupils. Their understanding of liturgy, their approach and reverence are testimony to this. They have high expectations of themselves and their pupils.
- Leaders and governors promote pupils' planning and leading Collective Worship in a manner that is appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- Times of worship are planned throughout the school year and invitations sent to members of the community at key times. These are also published on the school website.
- Collective Worship is regularly reviewed by leaders and governors as part of their self-evaluation processes. Procedures and systems are securely in place to promote, monitor and evaluate Collective Worship to ensure the best possible experiences are provided. Class timetables are monitored by leaders and governors to ensure appropriate provision takes place. Planning is monitored by leaders and staff members are observed annually. Findings are shared via monitoring reports and good practice celebrated.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Continue to address the areas identified on the Self Evaluation Document including:
 - continuing to embed the draft *Standards of Attainment in Religious Education* across the school;
 - making further links with the parish Jubilee Club;
 - continue the development of the outdoor area for prayer and reflection.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

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| How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education | 1 |
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CATHOLIC LIFE

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| The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school | 1 |
| The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school | 1 |
| How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school | 1 |

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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| How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education | 1 |
| The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education | 1 |
| How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education | 1 |

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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|---|---|
| How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship | 1 |
| The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school | 1 |
| How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship | 1 |

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is Outstanding, Grade 2 Good, Grade 3 Requires Improvement and Grade 4 Inadequate