



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. BEDE'S CATHOLIC INFANT SCHOOL

WIDNES

Thursday 16 September 2008

Inspectors Ms. Nora Finnegan Mrs. Dorothy Martin

URN 111372

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic Infant
Age range of pupils	5-7
Number on roll	183
Chair of governors	Mr. Lawrence Hanrahan
School address	Leigh Avenue, Appleton Village, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 6EL.
Telephone number	0151 424 3112
E-mail address	Head.stjbedesinfant@halton.gov.uk
Date of last inspection	20 September 2005
Headteacher	Miss Jackie Coughlan

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

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 Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Description of the school

St. Bede's is a large Catholic Infant School in Widnes, Cheshire. It is situated in a declining industrial area which suffers from high unemployment. Children come from a variety of backgrounds with some from relatively disadvantaged homes. The school serves the local parish of St. Bede's. Children are predominately of White British heritage. There is an average percentage of learners eligible for free school meals. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Very few of the children who come from minority ethnic groups are at the early stages of learning to speak English.

Children start school with a varying range of skills and pre-school experiences. Overall, their attainment on entry is below that typical for their age group. There are 183 children on roll of whom 163 are baptised Catholics and 15 come from another Christian denomination. There are 5 children from an *Other Faith* tradition. There are 11 members of staff, 10 of whom are Catholic. Six of the 7 teachers who teach Religious Education have a Religious Education qualification and 2 teachers are currently undertaking the *Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies*.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Overall effectiveness of the school

St. Bede's is an outstanding Catholic school. It is a vibrant, inclusive community underpinned by a very strong Catholic ethos, where everyone is respected and nurtured and life is lived to the full. This encourages children to flourish in all aspects of their development and establishes a very positive climate for work. Positive relationships, which are a real strength of the school, have been established by working in genuine partnership with home, parish and the local community. Standards are outstanding. Learners achieve well and make outstanding progress. Teaching and learning are outstanding. All teaching observed during the inspection was outstanding. Assessment is outstanding and provides very clear guidance on learning. The school is outstanding in meeting the Religious Education curriculum needs and interests of all learners. Learners' behaviour is outstanding. The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding. The provision for learners' spiritual and moral development is outstanding. The school is outstanding in promoting community cohesion. The Religious Education subject leader provides outstanding leadership and support to staff. The headteacher's leadership of the Catholic life of the school through the Mission Statement is outstanding. This is evident through her very clear understanding of the mission of a Catholic school. The headteacher, supported by the leadership team, has very high expectations, is aware of the school's strengths and has a very clear vision of how to meet development needs.

Grade: 1

Improvement since the last inspection

The school had no key issues from its last Section 23 Inspection in September 2005. Since then it has continued to develop further. Effective self-review, through evaluation of the information from the monitoring programme, has enabled the school to ensure that there is a consistent approach to high quality planning, creative teaching and learning and very thorough assessment of Religious Education. This enables the school to give children access to an enriched Religious Education curriculum that meets the individual needs of all learners and so enables them to achieve very high standards. Time and finance have been provided for the development of the coordinator and for whole staff in-service. All members of the school community have been involved in the regular review of the Mission Statement. Opportunities for spiritual and moral development across the Catholic life of the school, the curriculum and extra curricular activities have been highlighted. Policies to support spiritual and moral development have been developed. The Religious Education handbook has been reviewed annually. A comprehensive Collective Worship policy and guidelines have been developed. Parents/carers are given detailed information about what is taught in Religious Education and are invited to participate in celebrations. Resources have been updated to enhance delivery of Religious Education and Collective Worship. Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school are evaluated on a regular basis.

Grade: 1

Capacity to improve

The school's view of its overall performance is very accurate due to its outstanding self-evaluation and very thorough monitoring process. The priorities for both the improvement of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school stem from the self-evaluation and will be influenced by the findings of this inspection. The leadership has a very clear understanding of what needs to be developed and is fully committed to improvement. There is outstanding capacity and eagerness for further improvement.

Grade 1:

What the school should do to improve further

- continue to implement the targets set out in the school self-evaluation documentation.

Achievement and standards

Learners' attainment on entry to the school covers the full spectrum but overall is below that expected nationally. The percentage of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is within the national average. Learners make outstanding progress in the school with a high proportion of children in Year 2 exceeding expectation. Standards in Religious Education are outstanding. There are no significant differences in performance by learners of different gender or ethnic background. Learners with special needs make good progress in Religious Education through use of creative tasks suited to their needs and with the help provided by teachers and very able other adults. Throughout the school more able children are challenged in a variety of ways enabling them to achieve very high standards. A very effective assessment system enables the school to continually monitor the progress made by children. This, together with positive marking, gives learners very clear guidance on how they can further improve their work. Children throughout the school are confident in discussion and ask very good questions showing knowledge and understanding of Religious Education. Learners' work is recorded in a variety of ways e.g photographs of hot-seating and role play, cards, personal litanies, sequence books etc.

Catholic beliefs and values are at the heart of children's Religious Education development. Children throughout the school show real enjoyment of Religious Education. They have a very good understanding of the life and teaching of Jesus and are given opportunity to apply his teaching to their own lives and experiences. Learning about *Other Faiths* has led children to an awareness of how other religions make sense of the world, and the need for tolerance and respect. Children's behaviour throughout the school is outstanding. Achievement in all areas of school life is celebrated through a variety of systems in classes and at a whole school celebration. Religious Education enables children to make an outstanding contribution to the school community e.g. School Council, "Friendship Stop" etc.

Grade: 1

Quality of Provision for Religious Education

Teaching and learning

The quality of provision for Religious Education is outstanding. Teaching is outstanding. All teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident in their delivery of Religious Education. All lessons observed were outstanding. Through the monitoring process the school has identified ways of sharing outstanding practice. Lessons are very well planned to meet the needs of all children. The more able are challenged in a variety of ways and very good support is given to those less able. Outstanding use is made of other adults, who are very able, to enhance teaching and learning. All teachers use a wide variety of creative teaching and learning strategies that capture and retain learners' interest and involvement. Outstanding use is made of information communication technology to enrich teaching and learning. All teachers ensure that past learning is recalled, the learning objective is explored and keywords are introduced and explained clearly. A wide variety of creative teaching and learning strategies that capture and retain learners' interest and involvement are used. Outstanding use is made of the plenary session to sum up learning and lead children to reflect at a deeper level. Learners are enthusiastic and show real enjoyment in Religious Education lessons. All children are thoroughly engaged because teachers ensure that the tasks set meet the learning objective and the needs of all children. When relevant, use is made of homework to enrich children's understanding. Regular assessment of children's work is outstanding. Detailed records are kept and the information is used to inform future teaching and learning. Excellent photographic evidence supports assessment and teacher evaluation. All classes make outstanding use of quality display to enhance delivery of Religious Education. Teaching and learning are monitored on a rota basis and feedback is given to staff and governors. Thorough evaluation of the information from the monitoring process enables the school to identify in-service needs and ensure quality delivery of Religious Education. Parents and carers are sent detailed information about the topics being studied. This enables them to become involved in their children's Religious Education. Parents/carers are also invited to celebrations. They receive regular verbal and written reports of their child's progress.

Grade: 1

Curriculum

The school is outstanding in meeting the Religious Education curriculum needs and interests of learners. Through using the *Here I Am* programme recommended by the Archdiocese the school meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. A whole school approach is used and appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. Provision is made for those learners with additional educational needs by differentiation of tasks and also by the support given. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets national and diocesan requirements. Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to

Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales.

Very strong links are made with home, parish and the local community. The Religious Education curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to learners' spiritual and moral development. During the recent updating of the policy statements opportunities to develop children's spiritual and moral development were explored. It is very obvious that these are lived out in the daily life of the school.

Grade: 1

Leadership and Management

Religious Education

Leadership and management in Religious Education are outstanding. There is a clear vision for the subject within the mission of the school with a focus on very high standards. The previous Religious Education coordinator worked closely with the recently appointed coordinator to ensure a smooth handover. The coordinator provides very strong leadership for the staff who share a commitment to the subject's aims and values. She shows a genuine enthusiasm for her role. The governors have also demonstrated their commitment to and understanding of the shared vision of the school. An outstanding handbook guides and directs all staff in their delivery of Religious Education. Performance in Religious Education is monitored on a rota basis through scrutiny of planning, workbooks and assessment, lesson observations, questioning of learners and monitoring of displays. This enables the school to share outstanding practice and further raise standards. St. Bede's is socially inclusive by providing equality of access and of opportunity for all learners to make progress. Of the seven staff teaching Religious Education six have a suitable qualification. Two teachers are at present undertaking the *Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies*. Additional adults are planned for and are very involved during lessons. The subject leader attends coordinators' meetings and topic days. Information is disseminated to all staff during staff meetings or in-service time. Staff, on a rota basis, are also given opportunity to attend topic days. Time and finance are allocated for development of all staff. Before each topic staff meet to share *Before You Begin* and discuss ways of enriching children's learning. Priorities for the subject are clearly identified and targets set. Religious Education is funded on par with other core subjects and quality resources have been purchased during the past year. The headteacher keeps governors fully informed of the strengths and areas for development relating to Religious Education. Governors are very involved in the life of the school and discharge their responsibilities in an outstanding manner.

Grade: 1

Catholic Life of the School

There is outstanding leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school through the Mission Statement. St. Bede's is a place in which the Gospel spirit of love and respect permeates every aspect of its life and work.

The Mission Statement, which expresses the philosophy of education in this Catholic school, has clear aims and practical objectives which show how it is lived out in the daily life of the school. It informs all school policies and plans and is displayed in all classrooms and around the school. The Mission Statement is reviewed on an annual basis by all members of the school community. Children are given opportunity to explore it at their level to develop their own positive class rules and to make it central to all that happens within the community of St. Bede's. It is shared with all new parents and staff. Reflection on the Mission Statement and its clear aims and practical objectives provides an effective system by which to monitor and evaluate the Catholic life of the school on a regular basis.

Grade: 1

Collective Worship

The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding. The school provides Collective Worship in a variety of ways for each child daily, in class, key stage or whole school gatherings. This fulfils government and Archdiocesan guidance.

An outstanding policy which gives clear guidelines to support the planning and delivery of quality Collective Worship wherever and whenever it takes place has been developed. In-service has been provided to further develop teachers' understanding of Collective Worship. Creative resources to enhance its delivery have been purchased. Teachers and children plan and deliver Collective Worship.

Parents/carers are invited to participate in celebrations. The acts of worship observed on the day of inspection were very well planned and excellent use was made of creative resources to enhance their delivery. Music, incense, lighted candles and a creative focus helped to create a reflective atmosphere. Children were encouraged to focus on their breathing to enable them to relax in the presence of God. The themes were introduced through photographs and a gift box with a mirror. Creative use of a power-point presentation enabled children to pray the psalm and join in a response. Time was then given for personal reflection and informal prayer. All present were sent forth with the message that our "Great and wonderful creator God had made me". Children responded respectfully to the warm, nurturing religious experience. All classes make use of quality focus tables to enhance delivery of class Collective Worship. Collective Worship makes an outstanding contribution to learners' spiritual and moral development.

Grade: 1

Community Cohesion

The school's leadership is outstanding in promoting community cohesion. There is a shared vision and commitment to serve the common good. Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all. Parents and carers are very involved in decision-making and in the life of the school. They are invited to celebrations, receive regular newsletters and have opportunities to share their views e.g. questionnaires, meetings etc. Collective Worship celebrates, reflects and respects the diversity of belief within the school. The use of the Religious Education programme, *Here I Am*, provides outstanding support to community cohesion e.g. the contribution made by visitors from the home, parish and the wider community to enrich topics. Children have also had opportunity to explore the beliefs and values of other faiths e.g. Judaism and Islam. St. Bede's has strong links with the local community e.g. the local special school, Hope College etc. The school community shows a concern for the well being of those less fortunate than themselves in their support of local and global charities e.g. Nugent Care, CAFOD, Shoebox Appeal, Alder Hey etc.

Grade: 1