



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. BEDE'S CATHOLIC JUNIOR SCHOOL

WIDNES

Tuesday 29 January 2008

Inspectors Mrs. Marie Connolly Mrs. Sue Bannister

URN 111371

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic Junior
Age range of pupils	7-11
Number on roll	267
Chair of Governors	Mrs. Pauline Ruth
School address	Appleton Village, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 6EL.
Telephone number	0151 424 3386
E-mail address	head.stbedesjunior@halton-borough.gov.uk
Date of last inspection	16 September 2003
Head teacher	Mrs. Angela Paget

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 larger than average junior school. It is situated in Appleton Village, Widnes. The school serves a mixed area, in which there is some significant social and economic hardship. The majority of learners are drawn from St. Bede's Parish. There are currently 267 children on roll of whom 253 are baptised Catholics. Fourteen children come from other Christian denominations. There are no children from *Other Faith* traditions. The vast majority of children join the school from the infant school which shares the same site. Eleven of the 14 teachers in the school teach Religious Education. Ten are Catholic, 9 have a Religious Education qualification. The same headteacher and Religious Education subject leader are in place as at the last inspection.

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 most inclusive community, underpinned by an exceptionally strong Catholic ethos, which establishes a positive climate for work. This is a school where the well being of every child is of paramount importance to the dedicated and hard working staff. The gospel values of love, care and respect very evidently underpin every aspect of school life. As the Mission Statement states it is a celebrating community where everyone journeys together to have life in all its fullness. Displays in the school hall show how the 'Every Child Matters' initiatives have been implemented within this Catholic school's mission. Excellent relationships exist at every level. All are made welcome and made to feel that they matter. Standards are outstanding. Learners achieve well consistently and make outstanding progress throughout the school. Overall, teaching is good with a significant amount of teaching outstanding. Assessment provides clear guidance on learning. The curriculum is well planned. Learners' behaviour is outstanding. The Collective Worship is outstanding and contains deeply reflective and uplifting elements. The provision for learners' spiritual and moral development is outstanding. Both curriculum Religious Education and Collective Worship make a significant contribution to this development. Creative and imaginative strategies have been employed to enable this to happen formally and informally. The Religious Education coordinator, supported by the headteacher and leadership team, are exemplary in the manner in which they direct and guide the school. They understand the areas where there is outstanding practice but are realistic in appreciating the hard work and effort that enables such high achievement and standards to be maintained and developed further. The school is outstanding in promoting community cohesion. This is most evident in the compassionate manner in which the school reaches out to those less fortunate than itself. The school works closely with home, the parish, and the wider community.

Grade: 1

Improvement since the last inspection

The school was previously judged as outstanding. It has not only maintained its practice it has developed further. The school constantly sets itself targets in order to maintain outstanding standards and meet fresh challenges. Any new initiatives introduced by the Archdiocese are acted upon promptly and rigorously. The school is very willing to support the Archdiocese in welcoming visitors and sharing excellent practice.

Grade: 1

Capacity to improve

The school's extensive self-evaluation is outstanding. The judgements made in the document match the judgements made in this report. The school and governors are aware of and greatly appreciate the outstanding work being undertaken and the inspirational leadership that directs and guides every

aspect of school life. The school will update the self-evaluation regularly and this will continue to inform the school management plan. Any minor areas for development identified in this report will now be included. The leadership has a clear vision and openness to new challenges. There is outstanding capacity for further improvement as shown by the shared commitment to Religious Education and related whole school issues.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

The school has clearly identified in its own school management plan and self-evaluation document any areas for ongoing development. Any minor issues contained in the body of the report should now be included.

Achievement and standards

Learners' attainment on entry to the school is generally above that expected. Learners make outstanding progress in the school. Standards in Religious Education overall are outstanding, with learners meeting the learning objectives and outcomes set, according to their age and stage of development. There is no difference in performance by learners of different gender. Learners with special needs make outstanding progress in Religious Education with the extensive support provided by teaching assistants and some differentiation of tasks to meet their needs. The school checks on the progress made by all through assessment and some positive but challenging marking. Children show confidence in discussion and feedback, and a real knowledge and understanding of the subject and its relevance in their lives. All children show enthusiasm and excitement for the subject and when undertaking their work. Standards will continue to rise and further progress be made by the ongoing use of the information gathered through the monitoring of planning, teaching and learning and scrutiny of the formal assessments made each term.

Catholic beliefs and values are at the heart of learners' spiritual and moral development. Children have an exceptionally good understanding of the life and teaching of Jesus. Many creative strategies, including those using information communication technology are used to enable them apply this teaching to their own lives and experiences e.g. drama, role play positions of responsibility e.g. monitor roles for upper Key Stage 2 and the school council. The work undertaken on *Other Faiths* has helped the children understand how others make sense of the world in which we live and also promotes tolerance and respect for those whose views differ from our own. Inviting parents and others in the school community to share their different beliefs and cultural differences enables children make greater sense of the diversity experienced in living in Britain today. Links with the parish and local community are excellent. The new parish priest is a regular visitor to school and makes a significant contribution in supporting both curriculum Religious Education and also the spiritual development of the children. The behaviour of children throughout the school is outstanding. Children have a good sense of right

and wrong. Innumerable strategies are in place to support the moral development of all e.g. the prefect system, play leaders, and school council to name but a few. The school also provides outstanding opportunities for spiritual development. This is very evident in the care that has been shown in creating the whole learning environment appealing to all the senses. Beautiful displays, quiet areas for prayer and reflection and photographs provide evidence of this excellent practice. The children are enabled to make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community through initiatives such as work undertaken as part of Halton's Global Citizenship Initiative.

Grade: 1

Quality of Provision for Religious Education

Teaching and learning

Overall, the quality of provision for Religious Education is good. A significant amount of the teaching observed and evidence in some workbooks show much teaching and learning is outstanding. The learning needs of all children, including those with additional needs are addressed through the use of some highly creative and imaginative teaching and learning strategies, some differentiated tasks and by very good additional support provided by teaching assistants and others. Teachers should indicate when planning which tasks are to be supported and by whom. Sharing outstanding practice through the monitoring process will enable greater consistency throughout the school. Teaching is creative and enthusiastic which helps learners engage with the material presented and thoroughly enjoy their lessons. Some very good use is being made of information communication technology. This is helping to enliven the material being presented. Well-prepared resources significantly enhanced the delivery of lessons. Teachers and support assistants provide a most creative and stimulating environment which supports and challenges learners.

Good planning and a clear understanding of the Religious Education programme direct and guide all staff. Ongoing monitoring of planning, workbooks and lesson observations should ensure consistency across the school. The lessons observed had good pace and timing, which maintained the interest and concentration of learners and kept them on task and focussed. Some teachers need to ensure that learners have understood what the task is asking them to undertake. Generally, work is provided that enables learners to work well independently and collaboratively. All teachers ensure that learners understand the purpose of the lesson by sharing the learning objective at the start of the lesson. This is then re-visited during the plenary session. Learners' religious literacy is enhanced by the identification and use of the key words for each topic. Assessment procedures have been introduced that show clearly what progress is being made. This information directs future planning.

Parents and carers are enabled to become involved in their children's Religious Education by the provision of regular detailed newsletters and curriculum meetings informing them of what is to be covered. Parents also benefit from being invited to school for a variety of celebrations and assemblies. Prayerful reflections on a plasma screen have become part of the display in the school foyer, which is another way of sharing the Catholic life of the school with parents and visitors.

Grade: 2

Curriculum

The Religious Education curriculum is outstanding in meeting the needs and interests of learners. The school, using the *Here I Am* programme recommended by the Archdiocese, 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. 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. The leadership of the school ensures suitable positioning of Religious Education on timetables. Curriculum outlines are provided for parents. Parents are consulted on different issues depending on the topic being covered. Overall, the Religious Education curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to learners' spiritual and moral development. The enthusiasm of teachers in caring for the children and each other is a powerful example to the children of 'living faith'. They make the curriculum challenging and relevant by creating some stimulating resources and ensure a suitable learning environment is provided. The chair of governors is a regular visitor to school and is highly supportive of the work undertaken.

Grade: 1

Leadership and Management

Religious Education

Leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education are outstanding. There is a clear vision for the subject within the mission of the school with a focus on raising standards even further. The Religious Education subject leader, supported by the headteacher and leadership team, provide outstanding leadership and effective and efficient support to all staff. The subject leader shows enthusiasm, flair and commitment. Excellent documentation guides and directs all staff in their delivery of the subject. This also provides evidence of the quality of practice and achievement in Religious Education and associated whole school issues. Coordinators' meetings are attended regularly and information is disseminated to all staff during staff meetings or in-service time. A rolling programme enabling all teaching staff to attend Archdiocesan in-

service supports them further in their planning and delivery of the subject and deepens their understanding of the underlying theology. Performance in Religious Education is monitored. A rolling programme is in place to ensure all staff have their work observed. Feedback and support is provided. This ongoing scrutiny of planning, workbooks and teaching and learning and effective use of the findings will enable even greater consistency and raise standards even further. Self-assessment is undertaken for each topic by staff and learners. St. Bede's is socially inclusive by providing equality of access and of opportunity for all learners to make progress. Pastoral care is a real strength of the school. Excellent support is given to those children with additional learning needs. Of the 14 staff, 11 teach Religious Education. Ten are Catholic. Only 9 have a suitable qualification. Others have been encouraged to undertake the *Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies*. Priorities for the subject are identified and targets set. Funding for Religious Education is outstanding. Extensive resources have been purchased or created by members of staff and are deployed to achieve exceptionally high standards. The parish clergy are most generous with their time finding different ways of supporting both curriculum Religious Education and learners' spiritual development. The school is making some very good use of interactive white boards. Use of the CD Rom for *The Church's Story* and *God's Story* has significantly enhanced provision. Excellent use is made of display and photographic evidence that is annotated in portfolios and all around the school. The Religious Education coordinator and headteacher keep the governors informed on matters relating to Religious Education. As the chair of governors is a regular visitor to school she is very aware of all aspects of school life and completely involved in the religious life of the school. Governors discharge their responsibilities most effectively and use their own talents in many ways to enhance the life and work of the school. They provide an excellent link with the parish community.

Grade: 1

Catholic Life of the School

The leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school through the Mission Statement are outstanding. St. Bede's is a highly inclusive community in which the gospel spirit of love, consideration, care and mutual respect permeates every aspect of its life and work. It is a 'celebrating community, journeying together so that all may have life and have it to the full'. As the motto says this is a school that 'celebrates life and learning'. Excellent relationships are at the heart of every activity. An atmosphere of joy, tolerance and respect permeates the school. It is a community that believes and lives its mission. The school has a clear sense of its mission in reaching out to those who are suffering and those less fortunate than itself. Learners support a variety of local, national and international charities both by becoming better informed and by raising funds and resources e.g. CAFOD, Nugent Care, Catholic Social Services and raising funds to replace the roof in Oko School in Nigeria etc. The Mission is displayed as you enter the school, in classrooms, documents and other places around the school. Its aims and

objectives direct and guide every aspect of school life. The school has also put its mission into song which the children sing with joy.

Grade: 1

Collective Worship

The quality of opportunities and experiences offered for Collective Worship are outstanding. The school provides Collective Worship in a variety of ways for each child daily, in class, year group and whole school gatherings. This fulfils government and Archdiocesan guidance. Guidelines that support the planning and delivery of Collective Worship wherever and whenever it takes place have been produced including a simple format for planning. Collective Worship stimulates reflection on spiritual and moral issues and on personal beliefs. A beautiful focus for worship is placed in the hall when groups gather there. A focus for worship is provided in each classroom using suitable religious objects and artefacts. These are exceptional in quality. Baskets are provided each half term which contain suitable materials and artefacts to support teachers in their delivery of Collective Worship. Focus tables are used effectively for both Collective Worship and also during lessons. Children are encouraged to participate in a meaningful manner both in class and larger gatherings through prayer, poetry, song, dance mime etc. This enriches their experience. All teachers ensure time is given to individual reflection during Collective Worship and help children develop skills which enhance this. This was seen being undertaken beautifully during the inspection and was very moving. Creativity is used to support learners' ongoing spiritual and moral development during acts of Collective Worship e.g. use of different types of prayer, music and symbol. The manner in which all children 'Rejoice in Song' is truly uplifting. All teachers are to attend a Deanery in-service on Collective Worship and Liturgy. Mass is sometimes celebrated in school or in church. Parents, governors and friends of the school community, including parishioners, are invited to a variety of assemblies and services. This is greatly appreciated.

Grade: 1

Community Cohesion

The school 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. Parents, carers and children are involved in decision-making and life of the school e.g. development of the Mission Statement, using 'Christ at the Centre' to direct and guide all policies and plans. Collective Worship celebrates, reflects and respects the diversity of belief within the school. The use of the Religious Education programme, *Here I Am*, supports well community cohesion. Learners have explored the beliefs and values of *Other Faiths*. Visitors from their own and other faith traditions and cultures enable children to deepen their knowledge and understanding of these communities. This

also helps promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently. They show a concern for the well being of those less fortunate than themselves in their support of many charities including CAFOD, and Good Shepherd Collection.

Grade: 1