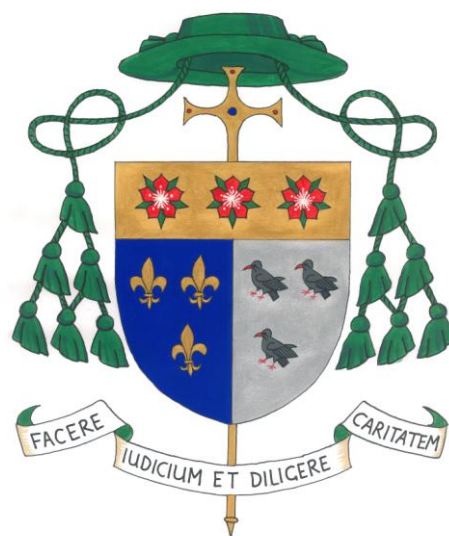


Catholic Diocese of Northampton



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

ST BRENDAN'S VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Beanfield Avenue, Corby, NN18 0AZ

DfE School No: 928/3405

URN: 122044

Head Teacher: Mrs T Morrison

Chair of Governors: Mrs M Goodman

Reporting Inspector: Mrs M Betts

Associate Inspector: Mrs R Jones

Date of Inspection: 9 June 2011

Date Report Issued: 22 June 2011

Date of previous Inspection: July 2008

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and in partnership with
Northamptonshire Local Authority

Information about the school

St Brendan's School is a primary school for pupils aged 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils on roll is 311, 87% of whom are baptised Catholic. There are 19 teachers, 13 (68%) of whom are Catholic. Most support staff are Catholic. The majority of pupils are from the parish of St Brendan but the school also draws pupils from a wider area with many from wards of significant social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is below average. Building work is being undertaken to extend the former junior school to form one primary school building.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Satisfactory 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade: 1

St Brendan's School is an outstanding Catholic school. The extremely strong Catholic identity permeates the school's daily life. The committed leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team is instrumental in inspiring a strong spiritual purpose throughout the school. This is used very effectively to promote the pupils' moral and social awareness which reflects in their excellent behaviour and positive attitudes. Promoting the care and well-being of pupils and their families has a very high profile. Pupils are very proud of their school describing it as a "happy, enjoyable place to be". They are aware of how the school's Catholic ethos impacts on their own lives now and will in the future. Prayer and worship are of pivotal importance in the school's life. Religious education (RE) has a high profile and very good progress is made by pupils.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

Since the last diocesan inspection the school has continued to sustain high quality provision and maintain good religious education attainment standards. Good progress has been made with the issues for development. Assessments are now regularly undertaken. All pupils contribute to the planning and presentation of their class assemblies and worship observed evidenced children sharing their own ideas and presenting their own created power point images.

The headteacher, religious education co-ordinator and link governor monitor various aspects of religious education and worship and have a good overall view of the school's strengths and development needs. The school regularly seeks the views of staff, pupils and parents on all aspects of their Catholic vision. The self-evaluation form is comprehensive and accurate.

The senior leadership is totally committed to promoting the Catholic dimension of the school and high quality religious education. All staff are supported very well by the RE co-ordinator. Recently she has worked hard to inform and direct the temporary teachers to the school's RE policies and practices. Staff are committed to improving their skills through further professional training opportunities. The governors are very aware of their role to further foster the Catholic life and RE.

The school with its current leadership, governance and Chaplaincy team has a very good capacity to continue to maintain its effectiveness as a Catholic school. Senior staff act as role models of living their faith. The experienced RE co-ordinator is totally committed to the school mission and works hard in her role. When the school operates within one physical building, consistency in procedures can be more effectively overseen. The school

undertakes training as part of a strong local Catholic network. The school has plans to develop assessment and RE marking to bring it in line with other core subjects.

What the school should do to improve further:

- include more opportunities within religious education planning for challenging the more able pupils
- improve marking by reference to success criteria made explicit to pupils so that they are more aware of how their work could be improved and are given opportunities to make the improvements
- embed assessment procedures by ensuring consistency of practice and an involvement of pupils in their own target setting.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

The extent to which pupils benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The mission statement is understood by pupils, used daily as a prayer and strongly impacts on the lives of the whole school community. Pupils describe it as their “goal to live by”. The pupils know well the school’s expectations of them and strive to achieve these. They praise the friendly, caring, loving attitude of the teachers who encourage their learning and help with any problems. They value the real sense of community created within their school describing it as “a family that looks out for one another”. Pupils display respect and politeness for each other and for adults and display exemplary behaviour. The School Council see their role as “making the school better”. Many of their ideas have been actioned. Pupils value the school’s links with the church.

Pupils enjoy the worship life of the school. Worship engages pupils’ interest and they respond very well to the themes planned. Pupils understand the importance of prayer and participate with ease and reverence. The younger children enjoy performing actions to the Lord’s Prayer. Pupils know and use a variety of prayer styles. They create their own prayers and sometimes share these in worship. Pupils appreciate the calm reflection opportunities given to apply the Christian value discussed to their own lives. Pupils’ participation in liturgy through high quality singing, liturgical movement, instrument playing and reciting prayer poems, greatly enhances worship. The prayer life of the school contributes extremely well to pupils’ spiritual and moral development.

Chaplaincy provision makes a significant contribution to the spiritual life and the well-being of the whole community. The parish priest and sisters are known well to pupils who respond enthusiastically to liturgical and sacramental experiences and teaching given in school. The priest discusses with older children difficulties they may encounter at their non-Catholic secondary school. Many children contribute to Sunday service through the “folk group”. They know that chaplaincy is wholeheartedly supported by school leaders. Pupils feel safe and secure in school and are aware of the procedures to resolve their problems, seeking out appropriate staff if needed. High priority is placed on the pastoral care of individual pupils. Sessions are planned for parents, and families are able to access support if needed. Parents appreciate the care and friendliness of all the staff.

Pupils make very good progress in religious literacy. They enjoy their religious education lessons especially those linked to learning about Jesus and those with practical outcomes such as illustrating work. Pupils have a positive attitude to RE learning and work together

very well in pairs and groups. They have a sound knowledge of the Catholic faith and teachings appropriate to their age and abilities. Most pupils achieve age appropriate levels of RE attainment and some exceed these. Pupils take a pride in their religious education work. Their books are very well presented and evidence a good coverage of the curriculum with a range of written outcomes including Scripture work.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

The headteacher powerfully promotes the Catholic life of the school and shows a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education. She communicates a clear vision for the Catholic ethos of loving care for each other and inspires all in the school community to follow her example. This results in parents being extremely supportive of the school and its Catholic ethos. The school provides extra provision for the local community such as a playgroup and mums and tots group. Very attractive displays around school confirm the Catholic identity. A well-being team have been established to identify and provide for pupils specific needs. Leadership promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development extremely well with pupils being given opportunities to reflect on choices throughout their daily lives.

The headteacher, RE co-ordinator and RE governor are all involved in monitoring religious education and the results inform the future actions of the school. The RE co-ordinator has made improvements and is aware of the subject's strengths and future areas for development. She guides and supports teachers well and regularly attends training. The school has invested in many new resources. Five teachers hold the CCRS (Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies) qualification. RE funding is high and in line with other core subjects.

Governors fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities. They are very supportive and regularly visit the school. They are well informed about the work of the school through the headteacher's regular report and undertake regular monitoring visits which feed into the school development plan. Governors have promoted the building development as an essential element to further unite the school community.

The school is a welcoming inclusive community where all members are respected and valued. Pupils effectively show compassion for others by raising money for local, national and international charities such as their support for a school in Gambia. Members of the local community are invited to school to share their expertise. The school participates in local events and has undertaken a litter survey around the local road. The pupils have researched the local culture of Corby. Provision for spiritual development effectively provides opportunities for pupils to link learning with their own experiences. Pupils learn about other world religions. The school invites parishioners and parents to share celebrations.

Provision

Grade 2

Worship, chaplaincy, and prayer are integral to the school's life. Collective worship provision is appropriate for pupils' ages, and gives them opportunities to be involved in Mass, prayer, liturgy and worship in a variety of different groups. Worship is well planned using visual presentations, drama, poetry, dance and music to promote pupils' interest and develop their thinking. A quiet calm reflective atmosphere is created. Following Jesus' example is a prominent part of each assembly. The older pupils have learnt to say the Lord's Prayer in French. Worship makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual and moral development of pupils. The attractive altars in each classroom effectively provide a clear focus for prayer. The parish priest makes a significant contribution to the sacramental life of the school and provides for individual confession. The chaplaincy team includes the parish priest and sisters who contribute well despite the many demands from the two parishes. It has its own budget.

Members of the Chaplaincy team provide further spiritual experiences for groups within the beautiful prayer room.

The quality of religious education lessons overall is good. Lessons are planned well with clear learning intentions made explicit to pupils. Visual presentations, open questioning, group working together and practical outcomes are all effectively used to motivate and interest pupils. Tasks given promote learning but differentiation is mostly by outcome. Teaching assistants respond well to the requirements of teachers and the needs of pupils. Teacher instructions are not always clearly given. Marking is positive and affirmative occasionally with extra questions to extend learning. RE homework is given and family involvement is encouraged.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is good, and provides pupils with insights into their Catholic faith at an appropriate level for their age and abilities. Pupils are encouraged to become aware of the demands of religious commitment within their daily lives. The religious education curriculum fulfils the requirement of the Bishops' Conference. 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education following the "Here I Am" programme with additional work linked to saints. Religious education is linked to other curriculum areas such as literacy, art and craft, drama, poetry, song and occasionally to information and communication technology (ICT). The church is used well as an extra resource for RE learning. Other faiths are studied but this learning is not yet enhanced by visitors from or visits to other faiths' places of worship. The curriculum contributes very well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. During the present topic pupils are developing a sense of rules to keep themselves safe. Attractive religious education displays around school give added value to this core subject.

Achievement and effort is celebrated regularly. Assessments are now being made linked to national expectations and levels recorded. Staff moderate the work together in year groups to ensure consistency of standards. Pupil progress can now be tracked and analysed to ensure planning meets pupils' needs. Further planned initiatives include pupil self-assessment and target setting.

The inspectors wish to thank the headteacher, staff and children for their very warm welcome and for contributing to their very enjoyable and interesting visit.