

Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Benedict's Catholic Primary School, Handforth

URN: 111323

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Mark Davies, Bishop of Shrewsbury on:

Date: 29-30 November 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	1
Catholic life and mission (p.3) How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.....	1
Religious education (p.5) The quality of curriculum religious education.....	1
Collective worship (p.7) The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....	1
The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

The inspirational leadership team lead and support the staff so that they provide an inclusive, compassionate, and joyful community where pupils and adults are treated with respect.

Pupils' work is of a consistently high standard and demonstrates a variety of challenging and creative approaches to learning so that pupils of all abilities deepen their understanding.

Meaningful opportunities for celebrations of the word provide time and space for pupils to reflect on how they can show love to one another.

The excellent behaviour and active participation of pupils in lessons and enhanced activities offered by the school means pupils make significant progress during their time at St Benedict's.

Because of the passionate commitment to recognise the uniqueness of each individual, support is subtly provided so everyone feels included without feeling different.

What the school needs to improve:

Devise an action plan that clearly identifies how pupils self-evaluate the quality of the celebrations of the word which they plan and lead.

Ensure that pupils and staff understand how the Catholic social teaching links they are establishing across the curriculum fit into the global vision of the Catholic Church.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....	1
Pupil outcomes The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school	1
Provision The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school	1
Leadership How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school	1

Staff, pupils, parents, governors, and priests say that St Benedict's is a warm, welcoming, inclusive, nurturing, and compassionate community. These are some of the words they use to describe what it is like to be part of daily life at St Benedict's. This school is a place where Gospel values are lived out in action so that all pupils know they make a unique contribution to the local and wider universal Church. One Lower Key Stage 2 pupil writes: 'If Jesus hadn't been baptised, we wouldn't belong to the Church family'. Upper Key Stage 2 pupils eagerly apply to be part of the Mini Vinnies and Team Benedict, and pupils understand that their enthusiastic response to the work of these groups and individual pupil's requests to support those less fortunate does make a positive difference. Pupils know that the one rule, 'Respect' helps them to feel safe and happy coming into school and the buddy systems in place ensure no one is without a friend at playtimes.

At the beginning of every year all teachers plan an activity focused on the mission statement. This means pupils develop an understanding of the mission at an appropriate level, and because it is part of the school prayer, pupils reflect on it regularly. The Catholic character of the school is highlighted by the variety of displays, which reflect the values and qualities of the school's house saints. Pastoral care is a high priority for all adults working in St Benedict's. Staff told us that every child is seen as an individual and treated with dignity, respect, and forgiveness. Because of this, support is subtly provided so everyone feels included without feeling different. Staff engage willingly in activities that enhance the mission of the school and freely give their own time: for example, compassionately opening the school to support families after a bereavement and joining the local memorial service each November. Inclusivity is a strength and families of other faiths and cultures are invited to share their traditions. Staff work hard to ensure every pupil, whatever their ability or need, can flourish because of the opportunities, and support they provide to enable active

participation. Links with the parish are a strength and this partnership is cherished by the community. One governor says: 'This is so much more than just a school and a parish'. Each class in turn attends Mass on a Thursday morning in the parish and the all-inclusive choir enjoy singing at the monthly Mass on a Sunday. Team Benedict and Mini Vinnies enjoy leading the intercessions at the Mass for the sick and housebound, which is greatly valued by parishioners.

Senior leaders are deeply committed to ensuring Christ is at the heart of St Benedict's. Questionnaire responses from parents show overwhelming support for senior leaders and staff. This is mirrored in discussions with parents, governors, and staff. All say they are now proud to be part of St Benedict's because of the dedication and practical support of the senior leadership team. The inspirational head teacher leads this strong, experienced team so that the school and parish community provide a nurturing environment for all to develop spiritually and emotionally. The relationship, sex and health education leader ensures that the curriculum meets statutory and diocesan requirements. She enhances provision by weaving in 'Big questions' that link to Gospel values. This approach is now shared with another Catholic school. Leaders and governors are considering ways to further develop the pupils' understanding of our collective responsibility to care for our common home by focusing on the principles of Catholic social teaching in a more structured way.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

1

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

1

Pupils demonstrate excellent knowledge and understanding of their learning as outlined in the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Lessons are structured so that pupils in all ability groups benefit from time to reflect upon what they have previously learnt before developing the topic. Therefore, their attainment is similar or above standards in other core subjects. Their progress is evidenced by the work in pupils' books, assessments, and pupil voice. This evidence demonstrates that they make excellent progress from their starting points in Reception to the end of Year 6. Pupils are highly skilled when using religious vocabulary to express their understanding and formulate their own questions about topics. For example, one Key Stage 2 pupil asks, 'Can God stop bad things happening?' Another pupil explains to a Key Stage 1 pupil that we can't answer some questions because they are mysteries. Pupils speak confidently about stories from the Old and New Testaments and the youngest children know what each Advent candle represents. Pupils know Jesus could perform miracles because he is the Son of God.

Teachers are committed to teaching religious education and understand the importance it has for daily life. They are well supported by teaching assistants, who work hard to ensure all pupils access the activities set. Teachers have high expectations and set challenging and creative tasks so that pupils enjoy and engage enthusiastically in their religious education lessons. Effective questioning in lessons is a strength and because of this, from an early age, pupils think widely about topics and can formulate their own questions to deepen their understanding. Pupils are frequently given tasks that involve them expressing their own views and this leads to a natural curiosity about the wonder of God and creation. On 'no pen' day pupils consider images of Jesus and use appropriate vocabulary, such as 'the Lamb of God' and 'the Good Shepherd'. When discussing an image of Jesus on the cross one pupil says, 'Jesus looks like he is suffering. He did that to forgive us from our sins'. Links are being made with other subjects so that pupils understand that their learning in religious

education is relevant to their lives. Key Stage 1 pupils have texts in geography that promote discussion about equality and injustice. This demonstrates the challenge teachers present to pupils.

The high level of knowledge and understanding that pupils achieve is driven by the passionate belief of the subject leader that religious education is the foundation of the whole curriculum. This permeates through to the staff, who feel valued and always supported. Numerous opportunities are taken up by staff to attend relevant courses. Several staff have either completed or are studying the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. Other staff have attended the Christ at the Centre course. Quality resources for lessons, as well as effective training provided by the subject leader, leads to staff designing a curriculum that pupils enjoy and enthusiastically engage with. Because of this, behaviour in lessons is exemplary and all lessons observed were at least good with some outstanding. Leaders have an effective feedback policy meaning that work is celebrated during lessons by sharing examples of good work. Verbal feedback and pupil conferencing mean pupils know how to improve. This approach gives opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work. Discussions with parents, staff, and governors indicate the positive impact and transformation all senior leaders have on raising the status of the religious education curriculum. Staff feel more confident, valued, and supported knowing that the subject leader will always give her time to support them.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1

Pupils fully participate in celebrations of the word. They have times of prayerful reflection, listen to meaningful texts from scripture, and join in joyfully when singing hymns which are often signed. Pupils understand the meaning of a range of symbols and can link them confidently to specific times in the liturgical year. They benefit from a well-planned liturgical framework, which enables them to celebrate, appropriate to their age, the major feasts together with the parish, the whole school or in their own classrooms. Members of Team Benedict play a significant role in helping their peers join in with celebrations of the word, and they often lead the weekly whole school celebration. They also visit classes at special times of the year. For example, they explain the meaning of the rosary to younger children and change the colour of the cloths on the prayer tables in every classroom to fit in with the time of the year. As a result, the youngest children begin to develop an understanding of significant times of the liturgical year. Every pupil has opportunities to lead prayer in class and a range of creative ideas appropriate to the pupils' ages are evident. Pupils also say they enjoy the Pentecost party and Advent prayer trails.

There is a daily pattern of prayer, and at times of sorrow, prayer is a powerful source of comfort to pupils, staff, and governors. Scripture passages are carefully chosen, read from the Bible, and are linked to daily life. Staff are exemplary role models and with the help of the subject leader they feel well supported to guide pupils confidently to plan and lead times of prayer appropriate to their age. As well as identified prayer tables in each classroom, there are further areas inside school. Outside there are another two areas for quiet reflection, which have meaningful memories for the school community. Partnership with the parish is a strength, and staff and parishioners work together to provide many opportunities for families to take part in Masses at church, including a monthly Mass on a Sunday.

The policy for prayer and liturgy is clear and useful for staff as it identifies the progression of skills for pupils that eventually lead to them planning celebrations of the word independently. It also lists all the formal prayers that pupils are expected to know as they progress through the school. Together with the priests, leaders and governors carefully plan designated times to celebrate the Eucharist in church. The religious education subject leader is instrumental in preparing the pupils for the first sacraments and staff willingly offer their time to celebrate special occasions such as these. A member of the SVP (St Vincent de Paul Society) and a parish link person start each Mini Vinnies' meeting with prayer and provide all members with their own prayer book. They pray about their responsibilities to support the most vulnerable and only organise events after discussing the benefits. The link governor together with a member of staff led a project to create an explanatory statement with pupils to highlight the importance of caring for the environment alongside an effective display using sustainable materials. This provides a practical response following times of prayer and reflection about our world. Because of consultant-led training on how to provide meaningful times of prayer and liturgy, organised by the religious education lead, staff say they are more confident in helping pupils plan and lead celebrations of the word in their own classes. Self-evaluation is an area that leaders have identified for development to further improve these experiences for all.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Benedict's Catholic Primary
School unique reference number (URN)	111323
Full postal address of the school	Hall Road, Handforth, SK9 3AE
School phone number	01625 520207
Name of head teacher or principal	Mrs Hannah McGuire
Chair of governing board	Mrs Kirsty Guite
School Website	stbenedicts.cheshire.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Trustees	Diocese of Shrewsbury
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	29 November 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team.

Sue Lyonette	Lead inspector
Michael Glynn	Team inspector

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement