

# 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 L Brydon

Chair of Governors: Miss C Smith

Reporting Inspector: Mrs P O'Byrne

Associate Inspector: Mrs P Brannigan

**Date of Inspection: 24 May 2017**

Date Report Issued: 14 June 2017

Date of previous Inspection: June 2011

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

## **Information about the school**

St Brendan's Catholic School is an expanding primary school in Corby which is due to become fully two-form entry in September 2017. The school was built to serve St Brendan's parish but also welcomes pupils from the surrounding areas. There are 330 pupils aged 4-11 on roll; 95% of Key Stage 2 pupils are Catholics but the figure drops significantly to 71% in Key Stage 1 and 53% in Early Years. All members of staff fully support the school's mission; 69% are Catholic and 79% of the support staff are Catholic. Pupils' attainment on entry is below the national norm and EAL and SEN numbers are in line with similar schools. There is a growing number of pupils from ethnic minorities who are enriching the school community. In May 2015 Ofsted rated the school as requiring improvement having previously been in special measures. Since the last inspection the school has become part of the St Luke Academies Trust.

## **Key grades for inspection**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

**Grade 2**

St Brendan's is a good Catholic school which, in recent years, has seen considerable changes in staffing and governance. A new senior leadership team (SLT) is in place, several new governors have been appointed with a new chair starting in January 2017. The SLT, ably led by the head teacher, is very effective in promoting the Catholic dimension of the school; they are well supported by the chaplaincy team and other members of staff. Pastoral care is very good with pupils feeling loved, cared for and safe. Prayer is an integral part of school's life and is central to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. Pupils behave very well, work hard and thrive within a strong Christian community. Teaching is good and pupils make good progress.

## **The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**Grade 2**

Since the last inspection and the interim monitoring visit, the school has addressed most of the areas for improvement. Marking is now consistent across the school and includes 'thought bubbles' to challenge the pupils further. Assessment procedures are well embedded and have recently included a reflective element at the end of each topic but pupils are not involved in setting their own targets. The Religious Education (RE) action plan is developing as a working document to address the areas for improvement highlighted by the school in the RE SEF.

The school's self-evaluation is good so the SLT and governors have a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses; inspectors agreed with most of the grading in the RE SEF. RE is given a high profile and staff are encouraged to develop their skills and there are special arrangements for the induction of new staff.

The school leadership has a clear vision for maintaining the Catholic ethos and is committed to providing the very best for the pupils entrusted to its care. The school's Catholic dimension is also strengthened through membership of the St Luke Academies Trust, the chaplaincy team and members of staff who are good role models for the pupils.

A new RE subject leader is being trained to take over in September and this, together with a year of stable staffing, indicates the current leadership, together with the governors, have the capacity to ensure at least good effectiveness is maintained.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- review the provision for collective worship so that it is timetabled daily
- continue to develop the links between the RE SEF and the RE action plan, and ensure all aspects for development are known by key personal
- continue to prepare the new RE subject leader for her role and support her after induction in September.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

## **Grade 2**

Pupils love their school and happily participate in all aspects of school life. They are friendly and caring, ready to help others; they, in turn, feel valued, safe and well supported. Pupils have a good, age-appropriate, knowledge of the Catholic faith and can talk about the main events in the Church's year. They know and understand the mission statement and talk confidently about the work of the school council but know little about their classroom saints.

The prayer life of the school is central to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. All pupils respond well to worship and the prayer life of the school. Pupils know formal prayers appropriate for their age group and are relaxed in informal and spontaneous prayer situations. In the whole school collective worship observed, pupils were attentive, responsive and sang well. All classrooms have a prayer table and RE display board. In Year 3 pupils are prepared for the sacraments of reconciliation and first Eucharist, and Year 6 pupils are prepared for confirmation.

Pupils respond very well to the activities organised by the chaplaincy team and really benefit from the wide range of experiences which enrich the life and work of the school. However, they do not understand the term chaplaincy but they know that pastoral care is a priority in the school where everyone is expected to follow Jesus by 'always treating others as you would like them to treat you.' (Matthew 7:12)

Pupils behave very well and they are attentive and interested in their RE lessons; they co-operate and work well in pairs and small groups. Pupils have a good attitude to learning which is reflected in their written work. Consequently, they make good progress and achieve expected national levels of attainment at the end of KS1 and KS2.

## **Leaders and managers**

## **Grade 2**

The head teacher has a clear vision for the school which is shared and owned by all members of the school community. All members of staff clearly promote the Catholic life of the school and are good role models for the pupils. The Catholic mission of the school is explicit and evidenced in its daily life. There is a range of RE related displays around the school which are linked to topic themes, the liturgical year and sacramental preparation. RE is regarded as a core subject with appropriate allocations of money and INSET time. Both the current and the trainee RE subject leaders are very enthusiastic and good role models for members of staff. Their support is valued by colleagues and ensures all teaching is good. Much time has been spent developing rigorous monitoring procedures and thorough assessment procedures. In January, the 'Inspire' school improvement report commented on high standards of presentation, adherence to the marking policy, differentiation and good writing opportunities. The views of pupils, parents and staff are sought, "I feel our school puts beliefs and values at the centre of all we do."

The governors are aware of their statutory and canonical responsibilities and understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They are well informed about the work of the school and undertake training through the St Luke Academies Trust, the diocese or the local authority. Committees undertake much of the work of the governing body. The school is highly regarded by its parent body. One parent wrote, "The ethos of the school is outstanding." Another added, "Really good teachers who take time for all pupils and parents". Similarly, pupils enjoy the family atmosphere; they have a common sense of belonging. The school's involvement in charity work is well established and very good. Pupils speak enthusiastically about 'Dress funny for money' and other events they organise to support the Corby food bank, CAFOD, Mission Together, Lakelands Hospice and Mary's Meals.

## **Provision**

## **Grade 2**

Each class plans and leads an assembly for parents during the school year. Weekly whole school collective worship is planned for the year; there are also weekly hymn practices and achievement celebrations. On the remaining days, prayers are said in class at the start of the day but no collective worship is timetabled. Masses are celebrated for special occasion in school and pupils also attend mass in the parish church where parishioners enjoy their

enthusiastic singing and comment on their good behaviour. The chaplaincy team provides very good support although members interviewed during the inspection had not considered their role with the faith ambassadors the school is introducing next term to 'lead and develop the Catholic life of the school'.

Teaching is good. Lessons are planned well with clear learning objectives. Members of staff are enthusiastic and use open questioning, talking partners and practical activities effectively to motivate and interest pupils. The marking policy is used consistently across the school and 'thought bubbles,' which ask pupils challenging questions, were introduced last term and add a further dimension to the effective marking which encourages improvement or extended learning. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide good support, particularly for EAL and SEN pupils. A learning mentor works with individuals or small groups and pupils who feel in need of support can visit the sunshine room, a well-being, nurturing space. The school works with 'Magnificent View' which provides specialist support in school using low vision technology.

The quality of the curriculum is good and suitable for the age and abilities of the pupils. The school devotes 10% of curriculum time for RE following the "Come and See" programme, and fulfilling the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. The school council led a harvest assembly which resulted in 227kg of food being given to the Corby food bank. RE is linked to other curriculum areas, particularly literacy, art, and drama. The curriculum is also enriched through links with the parish and the school's work with CAFOD and Mission Together. The energy crew promote healthy lunches, activities at lunchtime and sports week. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of dance, music and sporting extra curricula activities.

The school is assessing work according to current diocesan guidance and has recently introduced a reflective element at the end of each topic so pupils can say how they are going to take what they have learnt in the topic into their everyday lives. Levels of attainment are recorded and the data is collated and interrogated.

The inspectors would like to thank all members of the school community for the warm welcome and hospitality extended during their visit.