

Report of the Denominational (Canon 806 & Section 48)  
Inspection of  
(Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

***St. Benet's Catholic Primary School***

DfE No: 935/2120  
URN: 142786

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Mrs Mary Sparrow

Headteacher: Mrs Sam Barlow

Denominational Inspectors: Mrs Jan Southgate  
and Mrs Margaret Stewart

Dates of Inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Date and grade of previous inspection: November / 2012 Grade 2

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL**

St. Benet's school is located in the historic market town of Beccles next to its Minster and is federated with St. Edmund's Catholic Primary school, Bungay to form the Catholic Primary Schools of the Waveney Valley. The two schools are also part of the St. John the Baptist Catholic Multi Academy Trust (CMAT). It is a smaller than average school with currently 84 pupils, mostly from White British backgrounds, of which 38% are Catholic. The proportion of pupils identified as having Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) is 15% of which 2 pupils have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). 29% of pupils are eligible for Pupil Premium (PP) and 29% for Free School Meals (FSM). The school has 4 classes of which 3 have mixed year groups. The percentage of Catholic teachers is 67% and the executive headteacher oversees the leadership and management of both schools supported by an assistant headteacher.

## **Provision during COVID 19 Pandemic**

During the pandemic the Federation ensured that provision for all aspects of Religious Education could be embraced by the pupils in school and learning remotely. Great care was established to give appropriate quality provision to all groups of children, so the whole school community was effectively supported and communicated with. The senior leadership team (SLT) tirelessly ensured that national guidance and regulations, along with the CMAT directives were adhered to and modified during changes as the lockdown existed and then gradually lifted. As well as teachers planning and designing creative lessons from the RE themes, they used a combination of live lessons, Loom recordings and work set on Google Classroom, Dojo and Tapestry depending on the year groups to engage learners in all subjects and for RE. In some cases, where needed, small groups and 1:1 sessions also took place. Ignite 'Third Thursday' assemblies, diocesan virtual Masses and national CAFOD assemblies were also made available to families. As part of the school's mission, support continued for the Harvest Foodbank collection along with toiletry and food collections, which gave pupils purpose and a sense of still reaching out to others. In RE, spiritual journeying created a means to engage with scripture and be reflective, as well as teachers providing quality RE learning with aspects of role play, film clips, audio clips, art and music offering the pupils an inspiring, broad and balanced RE curriculum. Prayer and sacramental opportunities were in place for pupils and their families to engage in, including the use of the "Pebbles" resources for Holy Week, RE newsletters from Ten Ten with prayers to focus on at home and collective worship opportunities. With all the changes and adaptations that took place where and when needed, what remained an outstanding strength of the federation was the strong and effective commitment to pastoral care for the whole school community, including home visits and the constant reviewing of care for the wellbeing of all. "As a school community we feel that we can look back on this period of time and be proud of how we served our school community; we were there for everyone when it mattered" and this well-established care and commitment to well-being continues to be evidenced and appreciated.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL.**

### **Grade 2:**

St. Benet's Catholic Primary school is a good school with outstanding features. It is a fully inclusive school where the pupils and staff are supported, embraced, valued and given opportunities to be a significantly contributing body to the Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship within the school. The executive headteacher's outstanding leadership and management of the school and across the Federation has driven and inspired the school to significantly move forward. Supporting her is a proactive governing body and an enthusiastic, professional and dedicated staff. They work with vision, belief and commitment to improvements, which directly impact on the whole school community. The

next steps are to revisit and embrace planned links with the parish and local community so parents, pupils and staff can experience and embrace further, the wider vision for their community and Federation. Significant improvements have been implemented in recent years in a number of areas, namely; pastoral care for all, the Catholic Christian ethos, developing spirituality, standards of attainment and progress in teaching and learning and opportunities to experience prayer and gain knowledge and understanding of liturgy and scripture. Further targets in Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship are identified and are evident within the RE action plan with appropriate timescales and Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

## **What the school needs to do to improve further?**

### **Catholic Life**

For the federation of St. Edmund's and St. Benet's to review the school's mission statement and agree a short, memorable, child friendly mission statement unique to each school, created with the input of all stakeholders which reflects its own charism and ethos, and for this to be clearly owned and visible to all.

For inspiring CPD to have an impact on the commitment to Catholic Social Teaching and that everyone in the school community has sustained opportunities to put their faith into action.

### **Religious Education:**

To improve outcomes for pupils in RE, including those with SEND, by embedding effective teaching, learning and assessment strategies such as the peer coaching model and to include enquiry-based learning for deepening understanding of vocabulary and extending writing opportunities.

To develop more holistic ways of capturing greater depth to inform judgements, including for pupils with SEND and consider deeper responses to questioning.

To develop peer and self-assessment strategies so that pupils can make considered decisions about their next steps in learning.

### **Collective Worship**

For pupils to develop independence in planning and delivering class based and whole school liturgies and have a greater understanding of the roles of ministry.

## **CATHOLIC LIFE:**

### **Grade 2**

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is good and, in some aspects, it is outstanding. The Mini Vinnies and the School Council help to contribute towards the mission of the school "FAITH is at the heart of everything we do", in living out the Catholic ethos through organised activities, based on Catholic Social Teaching which promotes care for the world and home. The pupils recalled with enjoyment, the opportunities they'd had, prior to the Covid pandemic, of meeting with other generations of parishioners and this is hoped to be re-introduced. Pupils greatly appreciate being able to take part in organising charitable activities to support children in other countries, for example, the Congo where they have helped to raise money for a school, so they are better resourced. They are also inspired to raise money for CAFOD and closer to home, supporting the local food bank. The situation in Ukraine has impacted on their concerns for the well-being and safety of the people. They could describe the Gospel and British values and how

they impact on good behaviour and particularly remarked about the welcoming and friendly nature of the school community as they feel accepted for who they are and have every opportunity to be more like Jesus. They appreciate the opportunities to take on responsibilities and be involved as Monitors, in organising playground bags with toys to support good behaviour in the playground. A few pupils spoke highly of the fact that, since joining St. Benet's school at their different year groups, they are happier, feel safe and have more confidence in themselves. A few of the pupils also mentioned that "We'd like to lead prayer in our classrooms or in the hall and at Mass more often." In a meeting with a group of pupils of Y1 - 6 they proudly recited the school prayer with clarity and pride. The mission of the school led strongly by the executive headteacher, encompasses the Catholic Christian ethos and from parents' comments in questionnaires, "the school has been very supportive in all issues" and "the staff model respectful relationships", they fully endorse this. One boy commented "In fact, the school is unique, because we are able to stay a while after school to chat with other pupils and also our parents have this opportunity too."

The Mission statement is set on the word 'Faith' and recently a federation 'Values Tree' has been beautifully designed and become a visual emblem for the school. The school environment reflects its mission and identity effectively through displays, artefacts and liturgical resources. Staff have been given training in positive reinforcing strategies such as "Happy to be me" and support with the therapy dog visiting regularly, impacts on the children's confidence and learning. Weekly celebration assemblies awarding the 'Heart of Gold' also reinforces success and house captains feed back to the school on ideas and proposals. Parents appreciate the regular communication and feel they are kept fully informed of events and news. Pastoral care is outstanding for all pupils and programs such as 'Life to the Full', the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) programme together with the support of a wellbeing champion and mental health lead for staff and pupils, ensures that both adults and children's wellbeing and mental health is at the forefront of the school mission. The parish priest spoke highly of feeling welcomed and a part of the school and was thrilled to have the catechist in the parish now supporting the children making their First Holy Communion in school. The RE governor regularly visits and carries out monitoring visits which continue to impact on improving the Catholic Life.

The chair of governors together with the full governing body is passionate about the care and welfare as well as the improvements for the children and staff, as the outstanding nurturing ethos is clearly evident in the calm and peace within the school, which visitors to the school often comment on. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements of the Catholic Life of the school are clearly in action as seen in displays throughout the school including the 'Big Questions' which pose deeper thinking and impact on the happy, safe and positive learning environment.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**

### **Grade 2**

Most pupils, from their varied starting points are actively engaged in their lessons, enjoy their learning within RE and make very good progress. Standards for learning and attainment have been raised considerably since the last inspection and many pupils respond to more complex challenges with enthusiasm and commitment to succeed. Pupils with SEND are supported through scaffolding and are encouraged to make small steps of progress so learning can be sustained and built upon. Pupils enjoy the variety of independent and collaborative learning opportunities. As one pupil remarked, "It is quite inspiring really!" With the current initiatives in place within RE lessons, there is the expectation that some pupils will make greater depth of progress and learning. The use of the Big Thinking Books, written opportunities and collaborative presentations, along with live teacher feedback assessment during lessons, support the pupils in achieving the verbal learning objective set at the beginning of each lesson. During the lessons observed, teaching was good and, in some

cases outstanding. A wide variety of strategies were employed to engage and challenge learners. In the early years children listened to the story of the Ascension told through Godly play resources and the children responded enthusiastically to the questions asked. In key stage one, pupils work was differentiated to allow pupils to work independently while the teacher focussed on a group to share and capture thinking and ideas. Pupils were very proud of their work and one child wanted to share and explain each page of his RE book. In lower key stage two, pupils were challenged to explore vocabulary linked to the Ascension, give examples for their reasoning and recall previous learning about the Easter story to reinforce their understanding. In upper key stage two, pupils were challenged to make a prayer book appropriate for younger children in year 1. Preparation work focused on explaining to readers how to begin praying, and to think about the purpose and type of prayer. Other adults optimised learning for key pupils by prompting them or quietly clarifying information and scribing responses for the 'Big Questions' book.

With the executive headteacher having identified the need for pupils to make greater depth in their learning, teachers have received training for improving the quality of learning for pupils through embracing a variety of teaching styles which support consolidation of learning. Thus, the quality of teaching in some classes is outstanding. Deeper questioning, related to scripture, prayer, liturgy or the Sacraments link to values, art, history, the world and aspects of Catholic Social teaching and is open-ended and not restrictive. This enables pupils to explore, compare, and form conclusions using religious vocabulary through informed discussion and understanding. With the Growth Mindset initiative firmly established, pupils are willing to enter into discussion with greater confidence to 'have a go' and draw on conclusions. The school follows the Diocesan Primary Curriculum Plan and use of the diocesan 'I Can Statements', which match the new national standards, to make informed and accurate assessment of pupils' attainment. Teachers are thorough in their planning of RE lessons and this is consistent throughout the school. The school works closely with the other CMAT schools to moderate pupil's work in all year groups, giving a tighter focus on the quality and quantity of RE work along with identifying areas for further improvement. Most pupils take pride in their work in the RE workbooks and take note of the teacher's marking and comment which many respond to. As one pupil explained "We have pink for think which can be for a spelling or choice of word." Teachers often make positive written comments to encourage the pupils to think deeper and the quality of the written presentation of their work is, overall, excellent throughout the RE books. Collaborative work is seen where QR Codes in workbooks indicate where the pupils have worked together to give a short presentation which is seen on Google Drive. Pupils often show a maturity of thought with scripture, liturgy and the Sacraments in their varied responses and individual prayers. The next steps to progress will be the use of peer assessment for pupils to develop their own challenging questions for each other. Teachers are more confident in their subject knowledge to make informed assessments for pupils' attainment and progress.

As one parent commented in the parent questionnaire, "Religious teaching is central to all that the school does." Another commented, "They receive fantastic RE lessons!"

The executive headteacher's leadership in RE is outstanding and is a real strength across the two federated schools. She develops and monitors the RE development plan, works closely with the RE governor and decides the RE budget to ensure quality resources are available, where appropriate, and INSET is identified and planned to support the further improvements to the quality of RE. The governing body are fully supportive of the continuing improvements in RE.

### **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**

### **Grade 2**

Pupils are keen to take part in Collective Worship and enjoy the responsibility. During the Covid pandemic when it became restricted to class worship, more opportunities for different forms of prayer were created. Use of prayer trees for more personal prayer has enriched the pupils' experience of prayer. As one pupil said, "I keep praying with hope for Ukraine, that

there will be peace and forgiveness.” Pupils enjoy planning for their class assembly which is presented to the whole school and feel confident and happy to take a lead. Mini Vinnies have continued to plan events and encourage others to leave prayers and ideas on their noticeboard. Several pupils expressed their wishes to become more involved with charitable work and those already involved spoke enthusiastically about how they and their parents help. Pupils were able to explain the benefits of Reconciliation and “how it makes you think twice, before you say something you shouldn’t.” The Liturgical year of the Church is highlighted and celebrated with beautiful class displays along with the celebration of the Sacraments.

Pupils respect prayer and worship and are deeply reverent as seen after an RE lesson, when the children were given the opportunity to move into a class worship with the focus on love and light bringing friendship into our lives. Beginning with an image of hands making a heart and moving on to the comfort of light and Jesus as the light of the world offering friendship, this was such a calm yet powerful and beautifully reflective worship with silent prayer, prayers led by pupils, the teacher giving examples of how Jesus helps us, to then gently welcoming a new pupil from the Ukraine. This experience for all was outstanding and moving. With regard to the Sacramental journey for The First Holy Communion preparation, this has been particularly successful due to the effective partnership, input and liaison between the parish priest, catechist, teacher and senior leaders. A number of parents responded positively in the questionnaire to the preparation given to their children. The Family Masses in church have now been re-introduced and the children are able to take part again with readings and bidding prayers, which is fully supported by the parish priest. The school also embraces many traditions within the Church including the Mary Procession in May, which the pupils spoke excitedly about. Pupils have been involved in creating prayer garden areas around the school and take pride in their involvement. They have also had the opportunity to lead prayers at prayer stations. The school is committed to develop more ways in bringing the parish and school communities together again.

The school leaders and governors are greatly committed to building excellent links and communication with parents, and parents, as seen through the questionnaires, value the informative communication through weekly newsletters and access to the website. Leaders model quality collective worship, and support and encourage less experienced staff. The governors and leaders plan the budget carefully to resource collective worship effectively. The Ten Ten resource where children are actively involved in reading, drama and singing has successfully impacted on the variety and quality of collective worship.

The diocesan inspectors wish to thank the executive headteacher, staff, pupils, governors and the whole school community for their very warm and friendly welcome and their valuable input into the life of St. Benet’s school.



## **EAST ANGLIA DIOCESAN SCHOOLS' SERVICE**

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### **Letter to pupils explaining the findings from the Diocesan Inspection**

17th May 2022

Dear Pupils

#### **Diocesan Inspection of St. Benet's Catholic School**

Thank you very much for making Mrs Stewart and myself so welcome to your school on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May and thank you to the pupils who met with me to give your views about your school. I was very interested to hear how you all feel very safe and happy, you enjoy your RE lessons and working together to support others in the world and locally, who can benefit from your charitable care. The beautiful collective worship given by Class 4 was so prayerful and meditative and Mrs Stewart especially enjoyed seeing you working in your lessons, whilst I was able to look at your beautifully presented written work.

Here are some of the things we especially liked:

- The welcoming character of your school where you all feel valued and cared for
- The school provides good opportunities for you to develop personally and spiritually using Gospel values as seen in your Federation Values Tree
- The calm and thoughtful behaviour you show as you work in class
- Your enthusiastic approach to the 'Big Questions' in RE and how well presented your work and thoughts can be in your RE books
- Your commitment with charitable events inspired by the Mini Vinnies to raise money for others less fortunate

We have asked your teachers to consider:

We have asked your teachers to talk to you about your mission statement so that it clearly reflects how special your school is and that it can be seen and known by everyone. We would like your teachers to use what they learn about Catholic Social Teaching to ensure you all have lots of opportunities to put your faith into action and that you understand how to make a difference in the world now and when you grow up. We would also like you to express your learning in deeper, more creative ways so that your teachers can assess your learning more accurately. So that you understand how to improve your work we would like you to talk to your partners and reflect on your work together. And finally, we would like you to take more responsibility for planning and leading prayers, masses and reflections and that you understand how important that role is.

Thank you  
Yours sincerely,

Mrs Jan Southgate  
Diocesan Inspector

Mrs Margaret Stewart  
Diocesan Inspector