

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

URN:147274

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Terence Patrick Drainey, Bishop of Middlesbrough on:

Date: 18 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....

2

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.....

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education.....

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

✓

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

✓

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- St Benedict's is a confident, happy, Catholic community, working in enthusiastic partnership with the parish, where pupils and their families celebrate their faith and share it with others.
- The head teacher, governors and staff enthusiastically articulate the Catholic mission of the school and are dedicated to ensuring continual improvement.
- Pupils are happy and their behaviour and attitude to learning is consistently a high standard.
- Membership of the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust is having a positive impact on the school's capacity to continue to grow and improve.

- Prayer and liturgy are at the centre of school life and pupils, especially those in the chaplaincy team, enjoy helping to plan and lead simple prayer sessions both at school and in the parish church.

What the school needs to improve:

- Ensure that all pupils, appropriate to their age, are given opportunities to plan, lead and evaluate prayer and liturgy.
- Ensure that pupils are given active learning experiences in their religious education lessons where they can demonstrate independence, creativity, collaboration and challenge.
- Ensure that the chaplaincy team is given age-appropriate independence, to plan, lead and organise their activities, and is structured in such a way as to ensure a sustained growth in skills among its members, and is informed by Catholic social teaching.

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:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

Thanks to the dedicated leadership and example of the head teacher, the Catholic Life leader, and all adults in this close-knit school community, pupils develop an understanding of the distinctiveness of their Catholic identity from an early age. They know they are cared for, that God loves them and that they are called by Him to serve others and help them when they can. Pupils in the chaplaincy group are keen to support the Catholic life of the school and as one of them told inspectors, 'I like helping people but I have realised I want to help even more, and being a chaplain is the opportunity to do it'. They engage enthusiastically with fundraising and social activities in the school and parish. They help to serve tea and coffee after family Masses and write letters to senior parishioners at Christmas time. Pupils support two projects in Lebanon, having even communicated with children and workers on skype. Pupils regularly raise funds for Cafod, Mary's Meals, (a local food bank) and other worthy charities. The eco-warriors pick up litter in the school grounds and have recently planted trees. They have a respect for other faith traditions and have visited other places of worship, such as a mosque and York Minster.

Daily life at St Benedict's is focused on a mission to 'Grow in Faith and Knowledge'. Pupils know this and are also aware of the qualities promoted in an acrostic poem created by school stakeholders, to listen, inspire, serve, trust, engage and nurture, based on the first rule of St Benedict. There is a calm, relaxed atmosphere throughout the school. The school is working hard to increase its community engagement further. All members of staff are positive and confident role models. They work together to care for pupils and families, and provide a good level of pastoral support to those whose home circumstances make them more vulnerable. In addition to the charitable works undertaken by the chaplains, they are also given opportunities to prepare spaces for prayer and liturgies, both at school and in the parish church, such as the annual remembrance commemorations. However,

independence and skill levels are not embedded and pupils rely on adult support. The parish priest is in the school almost weekly and leads liturgies which the pupils greatly enjoy.

Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of their role, and put Christ at the centre of all their decisions. They have an accurate insight into the school's strengths and challenges. The school is a relatively new member of the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust and leaders are embracing the opportunities for growth and support this is providing. A particular strength is the school's engagement with the parish community and wider village life. There is a unique and creative relationship between the school and Ampleforth Abbey and College. Students from Ampleforth College have volunteered to work in the school, hearing readers and supporting pupils in lessons. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and speak very highly of the head teacher and his staff. Opportunities are provided and adapted to engage with parents and include them in the faith life of the school. A traditional parish barbecue event was recently relocated to the school field and a hog roast provided for everyone. Parents are also involved in supporting a gardening club and rosary prayer sessions at lunchtimes in October and May. All staff members show great commitment to being witnesses of the Catholic faith, supported by the head teacher and another dedicated Catholic colleague. All staff are provided with quality professional development.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2

During their time at St Benedict's pupils develop a secure knowledge and understanding of their faith and as a result almost all, including those with special educational needs, achieve at least the expected standard in religious education. They are religiously literate, appropriate to their age, and can reflect on how their faith calls them to respond in their lives. At the time of the inspection all the classes were learning about the sacraments. When learning about the sacrament of Baptism, younger pupils could recall previous learning about symbolism in the liturgy of Baptism. Older pupils engaged in a challenging conversation about marriage and the solemn vows taken by the bride and groom. Pupils learn and use religious vocabulary in their conversations, such as font, chrism, catechumen, and martyrdom. They know that they are called to be stewards of our common home and that we must look after it as a special gift from God. Pupils say they enjoy their religious education lessons, especially when lessons involve music, singing, drama and other forms of art, or when lessons take place outside. However, there is a lack of imagination and creativity in planning of religious education lessons, so learning opportunities are missed. Pupils do not always understand how they are progressing and what they need to do next in order to improve. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to work independently and to collaborative in their learning tasks.

Teachers have a good level of subject specific knowledge, including those staff members who do not have a background in the Catholic faith. This should be applauded, as it is the result of their commitment to building their own knowledge and understanding. Pupils' effort and achievement in a number of contexts in school life is recognised with the awarding of house points, stars of the week certificates and special rewards such as marshmallow toasting in the woods or tea and biscuits with the head teacher. Teachers give lots of verbal feedback during

lessons, and pupils can reply in writing to feedback in books. Teaching support staff give effective assistance to pupils and teachers in lessons. They also provide additional support to pupils with special educational or emotional needs. Work in books is well presented, though there is limited evidence of individuality or creativity. Inspectors saw lessons that involved teachers talking to pupils for too long. Their questioning was not open-ended enough to encourage high quality thinking. Teachers are aware of the impact religious education can have on the moral and spiritual development of pupils and big questions are planned into the content of lessons, to help pupils explore the implications of their learning.

Leaders ensure that religious education lessons comply with the Catholic Religious Education Directory and are resourced appropriately. Expenditure on religious education is comparable to that spent in other core subjects. Specific training on the distinctiveness of Catholic schools has been given to staff. The head teacher, as subject leader, reports regularly to governors and Trust officers on the quality of teaching and the progress and attainment of pupils. This enables school leaders to understand where improvements should be made. Governors visit the school regularly, often focusing their attention on specific aspects of school life and feedback is given to the full board each term. Governors provide appropriate support to the head teacher, whose well-being is a priority for them. Trust support is evident and the appointment of a part-time associate leader from the beginning of this month is already providing the head teacher with increased management capacity. The school uses an approved Catholic scheme of learning and as a consequence pupils make steady progress through the content. Leaders ensure that, where practical, there are a number of extra-curricular opportunities available to pupils, including sports, gardening, and art activities.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

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

2

Pupils enjoy the prayer life of the school. They listen and reflect in silence, read prayers, and sing enthusiastically when the opportunity arises. They know traditional Catholic prayers, appropriate to their age and they understand how to show respect to scripture. One pupil told inspectors, 'I love praying and I love saying the rosary'. Pupils can articulate how prayer can lead to action. In a KS2 liturgy, pupils prayed for people in the middle east whose lives are affected by conflict. In the youngest class, a child made a card for his buddy in Y6 and others wrote prayers for various relatives. The oldest pupils plan, lead and evaluate prayer and liturgy, with minimal adult assistance. Chaplains help to set up the hall for prayer and liturgies. In other classes, pupils, there is limited involvement by pupils, but this is not formally planned and sometimes turns into a lesson. On the day of the inspection the whole school walked to a newly established Marian garden in the grounds of Ampleforth Abbey and the chaplaincy team led a beautiful liturgy, with the parish priest. Junior chaplains were commissioned into their roles and a large number of Rosary beads were blessed for use in school.

Prayer is central to everything the school does and is carefully planned across the liturgical year. When scripture is used, pupils show respect, using the correct responses when greeting the Gospel and processing it around the gathered group. Inspectors enjoyed seeing pupils use sticking plasters in a simple prayer offertory, when praying to St Luke. Pupils know that prayer starts and finishes with the sign of the cross. However, almost all prayer activities are adult driven. Pupils' experiences and skills are limited because minimal expectations for pupil-led worship are not established in each class. The school environment is safe and welcoming. There are displays throughout the building celebrating varied aspects of Catholic life, including displays about the saints, Catholic social teaching, charitable works, community engagement,

and the mission and history of the school. There are prayer tables in every classroom, providing a focus for pupils when they are praying together. The school works hard to include and engage parents in the prayer life of the school. Several parents told inspectors that they felt their children were very well supported in their prayer life and often wanted to pray at home.

Leaders ensure that pupils and their families can pray together. They are keen for all families and pupils, of whatever faith background or none, to feel included in the prayer life of the school. The parish priest makes a significant and positive contribution. He celebrates the Eucharist regularly in the parish church and occasionally in the school on holy days and at other significant times such as the beginning and end of terms. Many pupils attend the parish Mass on Sunday. One of the governors runs the children's liturgy group. The sacrament of Reconciliation is offered to pupils at appropriate times in the liturgical year. Staff have had professional development on the Mass to enhance their personal understanding. Leaders have ensured that the oldest pupils are able to plan, lead and evaluate their prayer liturgies with very little adult help. This is not something younger pupils are expected to do routinely, and these skills are not developed in progressively, from the moment the children first enter the school. The celebration liturgy at the end of the week always includes a reflection on the Gospel for that weekend, for those who will not be at Mass. The school supports the parish sacramental programme where it is needed.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Benedict's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	14724
Full postal address of the school	Back Lane Ampleforth North Yorkshire YO62 4DE
School phone number	01439 788340
Name of head teacher or principal	Mr Ged Eddy – Executive Headteacher
Chair of governing board	Mr Ian Lovat
School Website	https://stbenedictscp.npcat.org.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Trustees	Diocese of Middlesbrough
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	June 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Mark Brennan

Lead inspector

Angela Philips

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