

**INSPECTION REPORT**

**St Bede's RC High School, Green Lane, Blackburn, BB2 4SR**

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Inspection date 17 March 2017

Reporting Inspectors Mr S Smith  
 Mr M Neill

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School Voluntary Aided  
 URN 119793  
 Age range of pupils 11-16  
 Number on roll 1011  
 Appropriate authority The Governing Body  
 Chair of Governors Dr David Gebbie  
 Headteacher Mr Des Callaghan  
 Head of Religious Education Mrs Anna Nuttall  
 Date of previous inspection March 2010

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<b>The Inspection judgements are:</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Explanation of the Grades</b>  1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The quality of the Word	1	
The quality of the Welcome	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	1	
The quality of Witness	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

## **CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL**

St Bede's is an average sized Roman Catholic 11-16 comprehensive school serving the area to the west of Blackburn and drawing from the main partner primary schools and parishes of St Paul's, Feniscowles; St Peter's, Mill Hill; St Edward's, Darwen; St Joseph's, Darwen and Feniscowles Primary School. There are currently just over 1000 pupils on roll of whom 90% are Roman Catholic; 33% of employed adults are Roman Catholic; 26% of students are in receipt of the Pupil Premium Grant and nine students have an Education Health Care Plan or a Statement which is below the national average. A greater number of pupils have additional needs, including 27 pupils who are covered under the local authority's Individual Pupil Resource Allocation (IPRA). The vast majority of pupils are of white British heritage.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING**

St Bede's is an outstanding Catholic school with a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education. The school is led by a very committed headteacher, a strong senior leadership team and staff, and an effective governing body who hold key leaders to account. They are supportive, challenging and committed to their leadership role. The senior leadership create an ethos which is inclusive, welcoming and prayerful. Welfare is demonstrated daily because of the excellent college system supported by the foundation school which is inclusive and secures effective transition into St Bede's at the point where it is needed. Teaching of religious education (RE) is always at least good and, in the lessons observed by the inspectors, was often outstanding. Outcomes for attainment and progress are well above the national average. Scripture is recognised as being important in the school and is clearly displayed around the school. The Word of God informs teaching, learning and assessment. Effective monitoring and evaluation ensure that there is on-going development of the religious life of the school and the mission statement 'believe all things are possible' is central to this. Worship and witness opportunities actively support the formation of the whole community in an inclusive and genuine way.

## **KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:**

- The quality of leadership at all levels in the school is outstanding, in particular, for the leadership of religious education and chaplaincy.
- GCSE RE outcomes are well above national levels and in comparison with English, are also above the national levels of attainment and progress.
- The college system and Foundation School promotes effective interventions with pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or for whom the transition to high school can be challenging for them; this ensures they are fully included in the Catholic life of the school.

## **THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING**

All school leaders, including the governing body and the headteacher, know very clearly what the school's mission is and its place and responsibilities within the local community. They are supportive of staff and pupils and put the interests of their pupils at the centre in making often difficult decisions. The quality of leadership is outstanding for religious education and senior leaders are inspirational in their commitment to the challenged and vulnerable families in their community. All leaders are daily witnesses to the Gospel of Christ and live by the school's mission statement: 'believe all things are possible'. The celebratory nature of so many activities leaves a credible footprint on the lives of the pupils in their care. Effective school evaluation defines the key priorities for the school and these are consistently reported on in formal meetings and outcomes shared with families and other stakeholders via school newsletters and forms of electronic media. Pupil leadership systems are in place. These have a positive effect on the smooth operation of the school as well as giving responsibility for aspects of school life to pupils; for example, fundraising and elements of the religious life of the school are shaped and influenced by a highly effective group of pupils who, during the inspection, talked positively about the impact of their decisions.

### **THE QUALITY OF THE WORD IS OUTSTANDING**

Word is outstanding at St Bede's. The quality of religious education teaching and the outcomes pupils achieve is driven by a strong emphasis on values. Equally, the quality of leadership of RE and chaplaincy is outstanding. During the inspection, inspectors observed some RE lessons where 'the big questions' were being considered. The teaching was outstanding as a result of thorough planning and involvement of pupils in their own learning. Furthermore, there was a high level of sensitivity given by the teacher and the pupils to the topics being taught. Very high levels of engagement and an excellent level of religious education literacy was prevalent amongst all observed classes, including those lessons in other subjects observed where social, moral, spiritual and cultural education (SMSC) was a constant theme throughout pupils' learning. Pupils' work books were beautifully presented, in particular pupils' 'values' workbooks, in which all Year 7 pupils took pride. Pupils commented to inspectors how the values aspect of the RE curriculum enabled a deeper understanding of their faith and formation. Assessment, marking and feedback is of high quality. Rigorous monitoring of books by RE leaders ensures steps for the future are understood and are achievable which secures better than average progress. Around the school site, the welcoming culture is exemplified by pupils' work, Scripture and icons placed beautifully in key locations which are a thoughtful reminder to everyone that they belong to a Catholic school. The religious life of the school (mission weeks, liturgies and reflections) often embed and compliment what is taught as part of the RE curriculum.

### **THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING**

This is a welcoming school! One staff member described it as 'at the core of the community, like a warm blanket'. The school sees itself very clearly at the heart of the local community and parish life where governors, parents, pupils and staff 'believe all things are possible'. Robust safeguarding procedures are in place so that all feel safe and secure. The nature of safeguarding is addressed by the visible welcoming of visitors in a personal way and ensures the dignity of the person. The diversity of pupils and staff who learn or work in the school is to be celebrated. The developing use of local churches for Mass gives the opportunity for the school to demonstrate how welcoming the community is and valuing what it has. Staff briefing is held regularly and is not just aimed at communicating information, but offering a prayerful and respectful reflection of the day. The delegation of duties and responsibilities to the school GIFT and prefect team creates a positive atmosphere of trust and respect for the learning environment. This is evident in the hospitality demonstrated to visitors, parents and others, as well as in the superb relationships that exist where the individual care given to everyone is outstanding.

### **THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING**

The quality of welfare is outstanding at St Bede's because all pupils are treated equally in the eyes of God and the vulnerable and challenged are fully included at the heart of school life. The Foundation School provides a sanctuary as well as a smooth transition into the main school. Pupils are happy and enjoy the first rate provision which is available to them. The college system is fundamental to pastoral care and provides not just a structure but a real and valuable system to promote gospel values in action, in particular, respect and forgiveness. Staff commented that 'no child is a lost cause'. College assemblies drive the positive school ethos forward and support healthy competition, charity fundraising and enrichment activities as well as supporting pupils' spiritual development and growth. Pupils demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence, for example, when working in groups, in planning fundraising, in music ensembles and in school council meetings, including meeting with members of the inspection team. The model of support for all is pupil to pupil, pupil to adult and adult to adult. Nobody at St Bede's is ashamed to be Catholic; pupils are described as 'like little rocks': their faith is strong. The depth of staffing and resources allocated to welfare is commendable with very clear lines and roles of responsibility and accountability known to all. Parents are equally supported in working with the school placing their child at the centre of a healthy pupil centred system. Sex and Relationships Education is comprehensive. Pupils describe the programme as 'non-intrusive' and 'relaxed'. This was evident in lessons and teaching observed during the inspection visit.

### **THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING**

Prayer is woven into all facets of school life. Prayer is used to focus the minds of every young person through meaningful reflections in the form of assemblies, liturgies and other acts of worship. The college system allows for a clear focus of each college to know and love each individual and recognise their talents and differences. In form time, common themes are followed and reflections held. Form teachers are very comfortable in leading this, as are pupils who undertake this role from time to time. Pupil leaders are visible in worship situations; for example, members of the GIFT team lead prayer and worship in college assemblies. One pupil described prayer as 'bringing comfort at difficult times'. The assembly witnessed by the inspectors was thought provoking, prayerful and touched the emotions of many. Pupils are utterly respectful of prayer and support each other clearly in the little gestures that clearly matter. The visual aids and stimuli contributed to the invitation to pray and be as one. Year 6 pupils are joined by key staff at their transition Masses held in their parishes. This helps to foster a culture where each pupil is known before joining St Bede's which resolves any anxieties new pupils may have. Whilst the school tries hard to link into parish life, the opportunities available to do this remain a focus for development, although some clergy are able to visit the school for specific liturgical occasions.

### **THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING**

On numerous occasions during the inspection, planned and unplanned examples of witness were evident. It is outstanding. The community is fully aware of how witness can make a positive contribution to the life of the school and personal formation. Modelled by the headteacher, the GIFT team, governors, leadership team and a plethora of other teams actively shape and regularly evaluate the Catholic life of the school. The school council for example, is well equipped to shape the Catholic values led culture that exists in the school. Members are active citizens and recognise that British values and gospel values are closely aligned. First class relationships are evident in teaching spaces where the depth and quality of them allows difficult conversations to be held in an atmosphere of trust; equally, when discussing routines and procedures, the council is able to bring a sophisticated view to school leaders including the prefect team. Pupils and staff have raised many thousands of pounds for others: Caritas Salford and CAFOD to name just two. The GIFT team work well with the council to make a difference to the lives of everyone in the school. The Beatitudes are cleverly highlighted in a way everyone can recognise and with the school's mission statement, turn ideas and ideals into action. Children from primary schools regularly visit St Bede's as well as for transition arrangements. The chapel space is used as part of this and para-liturgies are shared with the new pupils. They are felt to be welcoming and inclusive, as well as underpinning what the school stands for.

### **AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

- Develop further solutions to enable liturgical feasts and seasons to be celebrated as a school community so worship is planned and led by pupils and staff.
- To develop links with partner parishes in order to support pupils and families undertaking a sacramental programme utilising the prayer room and GIFT team resource more widely.

Date: April 2017

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the warm welcome received when we inspected your school on behalf of the diocese earlier this term. The quality of the welcome set the tone for the whole inspection and reflected well on you all. It is always nice to hear pupils talk about their school and its community in such glowing terms.

You attend an outstanding Catholic school. The quality of religious education teaching is also outstanding as is all the care services you receive as and when you need them. This is certainly the case with your college system. Assemblies and acts of worship touch everyone and there is a great deal of respect from you all towards those leading them. Many pupils talk freely about their faith in language which is clear and unswerving. You are a very active catholic 'family'.

Mr Neill and I were very impressed too how you care for the vulnerable pupils amongst you, those in greatest need as well as those throughout the wider community and internationally. Charitable fundraising is remarkable as is the commitment of those who instigate such charity. What a wonderful testament to the Witness of Christ by you all.

We wish all of you every success for your futures; that you may continue to 'believe all things are possible'.

Yours sincerely,

Mr S Smith and Mr M Neill  
*Section 48 Inspectors*

## Summary Report to Parents

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