

Catholic Diocese of Northampton
Interim Monitoring Visit
20th June 2022
St Bernard's Catholic Prep School (URN 110160)

Since the last full Section 48 inspection in June 2019 there have been two changes in leadership at St Bernard's. A new subject leader for religious education was appointed in 2019 and a new Headteacher, previously the Deputy Headteacher, was appointed in November 2021. The school has ensured a smooth transition in this period and the new headteacher has a clear vision and commitment to maintain high standards in religious education and to continue developing the prayer and spiritual life of the community. As a result of rigorous monitoring and tracking, the school's Self Evaluation Form for Religious Education [SEF-RE] is up-to-date and gives an accurate picture of the school.

The school has addressed the three areas highlighted for improvement in the last inspection report. SEND pupils are supported in a variety of ways to ensure that they reach the high standards expected of all children. Marking is positive and clear with opportunities for children to respond to questions which stretch the children's thinking. Children consistently respond and enjoy responding to this marking. There are many opportunities for children to take on leadership roles and the Faith Ambassadors have presented some of their work and ideas to the governors. The senior leadership team have nurtured a culture of positivity and gratitude. The school's capacity to sustain improvement continues to be outstanding.

St Bernard's is a unique school and the Catholic ethos of the school is reflected in high quality displays, art work and beautiful prayer tables in each classroom and across the school. All pupils take a full and active part in the Catholic life of the school whatever faith background they come from. There is weekly whole school, key stage and class worship, and termly Masses are celebrated by everyone irrespective of faith beliefs throughout the school. All worship is reflective of Catholic life, linked to the liturgical year and the school ethos, and addresses key issues such as the plight of refugees, natural disasters and caring for our environment. The school community celebrates key feast days and memorial days. Pupils learn the traditional prayers of the Church as well as writing their own personal prayers, some of which were seen during the visit in the class prayer books. Pastoral care is outstanding and the parish priest who acts as school chaplain visits the school regularly.

Pupil behaviour for learning is excellent across the school. RE books are monitored frequently with feedback given to staff indicating areas for further development. These books show clear progression throughout the key stages and work in them is presented to a very high standard. Pupils achieve very well and by the end of key stage 2 standards exceed diocesan expectations. A creative approach to teaching and learning can be clearly seen with examples of extended writing, art, drama, music. By Year 6, children are confident in making links between faiths. They are able to explore how values, morals and beliefs are interlinked between our Catholic faith and other faiths.

During the inspection a wide range of teaching strategies and pupil activities were observed. The children clearly enjoy Religious Education lessons. They are encouraged to question, discuss and think deeply. Teachers use carefully focused questions to develop pupils' understanding. Data is used to effectively track pupil progress and attainment. There is every indication that high standards in religious education are likely to be maintained.

Areas for Improvement

- To use the rigorous systems in place to evaluate St Bernards against the new Section 48 inspection framework
- To develop the school website so that it celebrates the fullness of the school's rich Catholic life and Religious Education.

The inspector would like to thank members of staff and pupils for the very warm welcome and hospitality accorded throughout the visit.

Mark Holdsworth