



## DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



### Inspection Report

**Name of School:** St Bonaventure's

**Inspection Date:** 16<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**Reporting Inspector:** Rev Dr W. John Dickson SDB, Ann-Marie Brister

**This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.**

Type of School: Voluntary Aided  
School Category: Comprehensive  
Age range of pupils: 11-18  
Gender of pupils: male  
Number on roll: 1637  
Appropriate Authority: Newham  
Date of previous inspection: 2009

School Address: St Bonaventure's  
Catholic Comprehensive School  
Boleyn Rd, Forest Gate,  
E7 9QD

Tel. No. 02084723844

Headteacher: Mr Paul Halliwell

## **Information about the school**

St Bonaventure's Catholic Comprehensive School is a voluntary aided Catholic comprehensive school in the borough of Newham in the diocese of Brentwood. It mainly serves the parishes in the deanery of Newham, which is one of the most ethnically diverse in the UK and which has high levels of urban deprivation. There are currently 1637 students aged 11-18 on roll with 710 in the Sixth Form and the school is over subscribed. The majority of pupils are of black or ethnic minority heritage of whom 95% are Catholics (yrs 7-11) but only 69% overall. 51.2% of student in years 7-11 speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average and 39.9% of pupils receive free school meals which is well above the national average. There are 97 full-time equivalent teachers of whom 44.3% are Catholic and 6 hold the CCRS and 5 have other Catholic qualifications.

### **Key grades for inspection**

1: Outstanding      2: Good      3: Requires Improvement      4: Inadequate

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

**Grade 1**

St Bonaventure's is an outstanding school with a Catholic ethos which defines its identity. Prayer and worship are central to each moment of the life of the school and opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development are excellent. Pope Francis' call for the Church to become "a Church for the Poor" finds a practical outcome in St Bonaventure's, which not only serves large numbers of students from immigrant families in an area of high deprivation but also offers them opportunities to excel in academic, sporting and cultural activities, as well as occasions to be engaged in transforming their local community by outreach to other faiths and social action. The Head and his senior leadership team have built on a strong tradition of excellence linked to the Catholic life of the school, which make it an active force for building up both the Church and the local community, as well as achieving outstanding teaching, learning, assessment and monitoring for all the students. Pastoral care is excellent and shared by all members of the school community. Relationships within the school are very good and pupils feel well cared for and supported in their learning. Parents welcome the Catholicity of the school and appreciate the good communication with staff and the way the school keeps them informed. Pupils' standards of attainment and progress often exceed national expectations.

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

**Grade 1**

The school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement and has put in place robust systems which ensure self-evaluation is accurate and rigorous. Regular half-termly assessments ensure careful tracking of pupil progress and ensure appropriate intervention. The school has a culture of rewarding achievement and progress, which the students appreciate and respond to well. The school gives a high profile to Religious Education and has very good strategies to share good practice and support new teachers. The RE department is seen as a leading department in delivering staff CPD. Religious Education is an essential part of the core curriculum and regularly reports on progress and development to the governor's curriculum committee.

The senior leadership team and governors have a clear vision for the Catholicity of the school and the central place of prayer, worship and Religious Education. Senior staff are very good role models and all staff are given opportunities to extend their knowledge of the Catholic Ethos and improve their skills through attendance at in-service training.

The current leadership has an excellent capacity to maintain effectiveness. The Headteacher and his deputies show outstanding leadership of a Catholic community through their leadership of prayer and worship and are well supported by staff. Governors have a very wide range of expertise and many are involved in the life of the school. Systems are in place to develop and strengthen initiatives which lead to very good outcomes for all pupils.

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

Enhance the Catholic life of the School by

- Strengthening and embedding the General RE programme in the Sixth Form.
- Supporting and developing the new Chaplain and new members of the RE team.

Support attainment by:

- Ensuring that more students achieve the highest grades at AS and A2 Religious Studies.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **Grade 1**

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They respond very well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. They are very involved in the wider community through the Students' SACRE, the Three Faiths Forum and Newham RE Matters, which is chaired by one of the students. They make a practical contribution to TELCO, The East London Citizen's Organization, being directly involved in practical local projects as well as in The London Citizens campaign for a Living Wage and safer streets. They have a CAFOD group led by member of staff and support Caritas Anchor House, a charity helping the most vulnerable and needy in the Newham community. Members of the School Council and prefects play a major part in school life and older pupils help and support younger ones. Students raised £15,000 for charities such as the Brentwood Catholic Children's Society, CAFOD, Richard's House Children's Hospice and St Josephs' Hospice. They also play a leading role in Catholic events such as the annual Westminster Mass for Immigrants, the Visit of Pope Benedict and the Pilgrimage of the Relics of St John Bosco. The School Justice and Peace group also hosted a diocesan day promoting '100 days of Peace'. Students show respect for adults and each other. Behaviour is excellent and students value the pattern of discipline and the sense of community created within the school.

Prayer and worship are central to school life. Pupils respond positively to opportunities to develop their faith journey. Year assemblies involve prayer, reflection, and the students sing with gusto. Students are involved in preparation and delivery of some assemblies, liturgies and masses and participate well. Students have their own prayer group in the reflective space of the Friary lawn. Students are involved in the preparation of the weekly prayer and reflection sheet. The traditional prayers of the Church are well known and pupils are given time for reflection and meditation. They are able to apply aspects of Jesus' life and teaching to their own lives. They understand the importance of worship and are given opportunities in RE lessons to create their own prayers, examples of which were seen during the inspection.

Pastoral care is outstanding and given a high priority by staff and governors who work closely together to promote the spiritual development of pupils and the Catholic life of the community. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and know where to go when they need support. They value being

in a friendly environment where they are listened to and encouraged to help each other. Parents value the care given to their children, the quality of education and the approachability of staff.

Overall attainment in Religious Education is outstanding. At Key Stage 3 achievement is at or equivalent to that of English, which is outstanding. The percentage of Students reaching Level 6+ has significantly improved over the last three years.

At Key Stage 4 over the last 4 years, between 75-80% of students have achieved A\*-C which is well above the average for boys nationally. However increasing the proportion of A\*-A is still a priority.

At AS and A2 students achieve more or less in line with the other A-level subjects in the Sixth Form (64% A-C at AS and 74% A\*-C at A2). Starting the new subject specifications more adapted to the students' interest and ability should lead to more students achieving the highest grades at AS and A2.

Piloting a P level course for some special needs children is an excellent development allowing students to access the curriculum.

Progress in Religious Education is outstanding. Both Gifted and Talented and students on Pupil Premium achieve well in line with other groups. At Key Stage 3 the percentage of students making expected progress or better is higher than that in English. Students work with application and interest. They enjoy their Religious Education lessons and work very well together. They are eager to participate in activities and keen to do well. They have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and abilities. Exercise books show coverage of the curriculum and indicate a varied range of tasks and careful attention to marking and student response.

## **Leaders and managers**

## **Grade 1**

The Headteacher supported by his deputies demonstrates excellent leadership of the school through the way he promotes the provision for the Catholic life of the school. He communicates a clear Catholic vision to the whole community, which is affirmed by staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. His emphasis on St Bonaventure's becoming a significant builder of local community and on building links with other faith communities and educating the students to a sense of social justice reflects Catholic Social Teaching very effectively. He has promoted a culture of students becoming independent learners, taking their own initiatives, and developed a system of self-evaluation which is detailed, accurate and identifies areas for improvement. The annual activities week shows the Head's commitment to broadening the horizons of students' learning, and achievement in varied and exciting ways, eg the pottery project and puppet workshop. The Head and Senior Leadership Team, and Head of Religious Education have a very good knowledge of areas for development and are well placed to support colleagues.

Senior leaders monitor Religious Education by means of lesson observations, work scrutiny and joint planning which is followed by feedback to individual teachers. Lesson observations suggest that all lessons are at least good with a high proportion of lessons that are outstanding. At A-Level there is clearly room for some improvement in reaching the higher levels.

Governors work closely with senior leadership and have a very good understanding of strengths and areas for development. They are well informed about the life of the school through the Headteacher's report, meetings with subject leaders and frequent visits. The governors have wisely decided to revise the entrance criteria for Sixth Form entry gradually limiting those who

are not originally educated at St Bonaventure's to 20 in each year. This strategic decision will enable the school to meet the demands of more Catholic parents at Year 7 entry and also restore the overall balance of the school, given the very limited space available.

Leaders ensure that the school is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. Diversity is celebrated and pupils are taught to respect other faiths. The school participates in local sporting and cultural events and there are good links with diocesan Catholic primary schools, whose Heads meet every month. School charity concerts and Enterprise profits enable student to make an active contribution to helping those worse off than they are. A wide range of charities including the Brentwood Catholic Children's Society, CAFOD, local Hospices and Caritas Anchor House are supported throughout the year and pupils are given opportunities to develop a sense of service and show compassion for others. Students are involved in preparing Christmas parcels and toys for needy children at Christmas, School choirs entertain the elderly and disabled in care homes. Provision for spiritual development ensures that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences. Parents are invited to many masses, school events and are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress. They appreciate the School Planner and online homework network which enable them to support their children's learning.

## **Provision**

## **Grade 1**

Provision for prayer and worship is outstanding. Assemblies and liturgies are very well planned and contribute to pupils' spiritual development. They include visual presentations, bible readings, singing and music. Pupils are involved in collective worship in their classrooms and are given opportunities for personal reflection. Each classroom has a crucifix which acts as a prayer focus and display boards which generally includes students' work. A small chapel/chaplaincy is at the heart of the school and is available for classes and groups. Whole school masses and the sacrament of reconciliation are celebrated in school throughout the year. Traditional devotions such as the Rosary and Stations of the Cross form part of the regular pattern of worship in May and Lent. Parents and families are invited to many celebrations. Priests from the Newham deanery sign up to support year groups and say masses and help with reconciliation. The priest from a local parish who also serves as a governor also supports the school through masses, and liturgies. There is a lay chaplain who leads retreats for all year 7, 8 students with residential retreats being offered for senior students. All Sixth Form students have a day's retreat at Aylesford Priory each year, which students find a real help to building their confidence and sense of community and specially appreciated by students entering the school for the first time. More active student involvement in the preparation and delivery of assemblies would enhance the originality and impact of the message being given.

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is excellent. During the inspection, lessons observed were either good or outstanding. Lessons are planned with clear learning intentions and an interesting range of activities. The need to show clear progress in each lesson would require even more attention to progressive differentiated tasks for the students. They work very well together and as individuals and the half-termly assessments indicate good progress. Teachers respond well to students' comments and take every opportunity to extend knowledge and develop understanding. Marking is consistent and outstanding across the department. Positive formative comments indicate clear suggestions of ways to improve. Very

good assessment, planning and tracking supports the learning and progress of students. Student perception surveys indicate that pupils are keen to know the next steps in their learning and this is being developed as part of the marking policy.

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is outstanding; although only 8% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The sixth form general RE programme needs to be strengthened and developed further in line with the curriculum directory and will need to be backed up by CPD for tutors who deliver it. It is appreciated by the students. Religious education displays around the school emphasise the centrality of faith to the work of the community. The curriculum enables students to become aware of their responsibility for each other and their environment. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development. The excellent range of extra-curricular activities enables students to develop their gifts and talents. There is every indication that current high standards are likely to be maintained or improved.

The inspectors would like to express their thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.

*July 2014*