



**DIOCESE OF LANCASTER EDUCATION SERVICE**

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION  
REPORT (Section 48)**

**St Bernard's Catholic High School,  
Barrow-in-Furness**

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION  
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL  
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**School:**

**St Bernard's Catholic High School**

**Address:**

**Rating Lane,  
Barrow-in-Furness  
Cumbria,  
LA13 9LE**

**Telephone Number:**

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**School URN:**

**112400**

**Headteacher:**

**Mrs Mary Page**

**Chair of Governors:**

**Mr Phil Newby**

**Lead Inspector:**

**Mr Philip Mooney**

**Team Inspector:**

**Mr Ian Nevitt and Fr Michael Docherty**

**Date of Inspection:**

**30<sup>th</sup> November & 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016**

St Bernard's Catholic High School is an 11 – 16 comprehensive school situated on the outskirts of Barrow in Furness. It takes children from the following Catholic Primary Schools: St Columba's, St Pius X, Holy Family, Sacred Heart all in Barrow and St James' Millom. A small number of pupils come from Our Lady's Primary School in Dalton in Furness and also from St Mary's in Ulverston. In addition, it takes non-Catholic children from the area around the school.

In 2014 the school was placed in Ofsted 'serious weaknesses' category. This, along with a free school opening across the road, which had previously been an independent school, contributed significantly to a reduction in pupil numbers. In June 2015 the school was graded 'good' by Ofsted and is addressing the downturn in pupil numbers.

The school has strong links with their partner Primary Schools and together they meet regularly throughout the year for liturgical events with the support of their parish priests.

<b>PUPILS</b>	<b>Y7</b>	<b>Y8</b>	<b>Y9</b>	<b>Y10</b>	<b>Y11</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Total</b>
Number on roll	151	113	166	174	164			768
Catholics on roll	60	47	82	53	84			326
Other Christian denomination	59	43	55	71	60			288
Other faith background	1	0	4	5	3			13
No religious affiliation	31	23	25	45	17			141
No of learners from ethnic groups	5	7	17	12	6			47
Total on SEN Register	8	22	12	9	10			61
Total with Statements of SEN	4	6	7	5	9			31

Exclusions in last academic year	Permanent	0	Fixed term	52
Index of multiple deprivation	0.21			

<b>PARISHES SERVED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	
<b>Name of Parish</b>	<b>No of Pupils</b>
St Mary of Furness	414
St Mary & St Margaret	9
St Francis of Assisi	6

<b>TEACHING TIME FOR RE</b>	<b>Y7</b>	<b>Y8</b>	<b>Y9</b>	<b>Y10</b>	<b>Y11</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Total</b>
Total teaching time (Hours)	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5			
% of teaching time	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%			

<b>TEACHING TIME FOR ENGLISH</b>	<b>Y7</b>	<b>Y8</b>	<b>Y9</b>	<b>Y10</b>	<b>Y11</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Total</b>
Total teaching time (Hours)	3.5	3.5	3.5	4	4			
% of teaching time	14%	14%	14%	16%	16%			

<b>TEACHING TIME FOR MATHS</b>	<b>Y7</b>	<b>Y8</b>	<b>Y9</b>	<b>Y10</b>	<b>Y11</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Total</b>
Total teaching time (Hours)	3.5	3.5	3.5	4	4			
% of teaching time	14%	14%	14%	16%	16%			

<b>STAFFING</b>	
Full-time teachers	40
Part-time teachers	15
Total full-time equivalent (FTE)	48.60
Classroom Support assistants	18
Percentage of Catholic teachers FTE	25%
Number of teachers teaching RE	5
Number of teachers with CCRS or equivalent	3
Number of teachers currently undertaking CCRS	1
Chaplaincy staffing	1

<b>ORGANISATION</b>	
Published admission number	200
Number of classes	6/7 per year group
Average class size KS3	30
Average class size KS4	28

<b>EXPENDITURE (£)</b>	<b>Last financial year 2015-16</b>	<b>Current financial year 2016-17</b>	<b>Next financial year 2017-18</b>
Total expenditure on teaching & learning resources	57,444	47,229	43,000
RE Curriculum allowance from above	5,217	3,526	3,200
English Curriculum allowance from above	6,900	6,216	5,800
Total CPD budget	12,376	10,000	8,000
RE allocation for CPD	248	669	Dep. on need

<b>How the school has developed since the last inspection</b>
<p>Improvements since the last Section 48 inspection (Nov 2011) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The appetite and drive for improvement from senior leaders is bearing fruit in practical outcomes.</li> <li>• Arrangements are now in place for pupils to increase their experience of prayer and liturgy and to develop the skills in planning and delivering these.</li> <li>• There is an audit system to support the monitoring and evaluation of prayer and liturgy; this has not yet sufficiently impacted on quality.</li> <li>• Catholic Life is given importance in the school development plan and is evaluated in line with all strategic aims.</li> <li>• Religious Education is now given its appropriate allocation within the school timetable.</li> </ul>

<b>RE</b>								
<b>Year</b>	<b>KS2 APS</b>	<b>% Entry</b>	<b>%*A-A</b>	<b>%A*-C</b>	<b>%*A-G</b>	<b>3LP</b>	<b>4LP</b>	<b>Y7-9 2L Prog</b>
2016	27.9	94%	19%	69%	99%	67%	36%	74%
2015	28.1	95%	23%	75%	100%	71%	45%	81%
2014	28.3	95%	22%	70%	99%	65%	35%	86%

## INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

**OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS**

**2**

**CATHOLIC LIFE**

**3**

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**2**

### KEY FINDINGS

St Bernard's is a Catholic School with many good features. Since 2011 there has been an understandable and reasonable focus on improving outcomes for pupils in all subjects. The Headteacher has shown great emotional intelligence in addressing known weaknesses, prioritising gaps in provision and developing a sense of corporate responsibility for outcomes among staff. The evidence of this is that these crucial aspects of the schools' work are good. There is a shared understanding that a greater focus must now be placed on the Catholic Life of the school and pupils and staff show a strong appetite for embracing this opportunity.

The pupils of St Bernard's are proud to be a part of the school community. They describe the school as a family. 'Be part of St Bernard's Family' is a fitting and accurate aspiration for prospective members of the school community as well as a reflection of the cooperation and mutual support evident between staff and pupils.

The school has good capacity for improvement. The Headteacher's vision for improvement is supported by dedicated Governors who are open to change and committed to the pupils they serve.

Catholic Life is not yet good overall because responsibilities for its development are not fully shared across a wider group of staff at all levels. Recent positive developments are not yet embedded as routines and, in particular, prayer and liturgy is not yet a rich and uniform experience across school.

Pastoral provision, which underpins Catholic Life, is a reflection of Jesus' teachings and is outstanding.

Religious Education is good and pupils achieve very well compared to others in Catholic schools. Pupils enjoy and benefit from teaching which is good overall and in parts outstanding. The very positive relationships between teachers and pupils are mutually beneficial and by the time pupils leave they have developed a rounded knowledge of the spiritual, moral and cultural religious curriculum. Religious Education is not yet outstanding because some pupil sub-groups make less progress than their peers and all teachers do not consistently apply assessment practices.

## **WHAT THE SCHOOL NEEDS TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER**

To improve further the school needs to:

- Enrich the liturgical life of the school by making full use of the *Policy for Collective Worship* in which the expectation of pupil participation, at all levels, is clearly realised.
- Ensure the remit of Chaplaincy extends to a greater number of colleagues and pupils.
- Raise expectations in terms of Catholic Life by building upon the clear thirst for faith and learning.
- Cultivate a learning climate in Religious Education where high challenge is normative within a stimulating learning environment.
- Continue and expand the curriculum review of Religious Education so that foundations for the challenging Key Stage 4 curriculum are laid early.
- Develop regular assessment, including peer and self-assessment in Religious Education and aim for greater consistency in this, across all staff and both key stages
- Provide well-planned ongoing formation for existing staff (particularly through the use of the CCRS) to overcome weaknesses in understanding of a full expression of Catholic Life.

## PART A: CATHOLIC LIFE

### THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

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The Catholic Life of the school requires improvement. Leaders and managers at St. Bernard's Catholic High School work hard to enable all within the family of the school to experience an authentically Catholic education. Staff demonstrate a commitment to meeting the needs of all pupils under their care. They are motivated by a desire to serve the needs of families associated with the school and attempt to do so within the framework of the Catholic vision for education. Pupils show a genuine commitment to respond with enthusiasm to the expectations of staff and senior leaders.

St. Bernard's is building foundations that should allow it to flourish in the future. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and this creates an open learning environment. However, low expectations hinder the development of the Catholic Life of the school – and a greater appreciation of expectations in other Catholic Schools would support improvement.

Governors are supportive of the senior leadership. They describe St. Bernard's as a beacon in the local community, historically offering strength and consistency in an educational environment where there has been instability over recent years.

Pupils are active participants in Catholic Life and increasingly take responsibility for it. They value and show a high level of respect for prayer and liturgy but have yet to shape its content. Because there is a reliable approach to the development and sharing of resources for worship, pupils' experiences are consistent; however, they do not feel they have ownership of materials. Allowing a greater participation of pupils in the planning of liturgy would bring an increased sense of belonging and a realisation that their contribution matters.

Pupils strongly articulate the value of the school as a family and this underpins pupils' convincing affiliation with the school Mission Statement. Incrementally, pupil opportunities for spiritual reflection are increasing; the leadership of some assemblies by prefects and the involvement of pupils in writing school and form prayers illustrate pupils' capacity for having a more pro-active involvement in the liturgical life of the school.

Pupils demonstrate a strong commitment to providing for the needs of others and large numbers are actively involved in charitable works. All pupils understand the school commitment to support the most vulnerable at a local and global level

and are able to articulate this in relation to the living out of virtues and see this as a reflection of the teachings of Jesus. Charities supported include Mary's Meals, CAFOD as well as local and national causes. The recent development of the Global Learning Programme is a very positive step allowing subject areas beyond Religious Education to contribute to issues of justice and peace at local and international level.

By the time pupils come to leave St Bernard's, their spiritual and moral formation enables them to reflect significantly on their place in the world, future career choices and opportunities to serve the vulnerable in our society.

The Headteacher is a highly credible witness to Catholic Life and this is influencing the formation of senior colleagues. Planned adjustments to the Governing Body have been designed to ensure that this aspect of leadership is bolstered and this will support the Headteacher's ambitions for St Bernard's to be an outstanding Catholic school. Governors are supportive of the Catholic Life of the school and these adjustments will help them articulate this in a richer way. Currently, expectations are too low and as a result the school does not yet fully reflect the potential it has.

The difficulty of recruiting committed Catholic practitioners is an ever present reality for the school; this issue is recognised by the school but not yet fully addressed

Leaders and managers describe the improving provision and this is evident in a range of school policies reflecting the school mission. The school website and prospectus both promote St Bernard's as a Catholic School and senior leaders see the value of embedding Catholic life across the curriculum as well as in enrichment activities and prayer and liturgy. The school improvement plan makes it clear that the development of Catholic Life is a core aim. The responsibility for this work, however, falls on too small a number of individuals. Some key personnel are active in the promotion of improved provision but all staff in a Catholic School, regardless of their own faith, have a part to play, and this is currently not the case. Many staff recognise the value of recent training, focused on Catholic Life and personal spiritual growth. There is evidence that this is making an impact on pupils also.

The Lay Chaplain has shown dedication and commitment to her work over many years. Through Chapel lessons there is intent to offer formation for staff and pupils in the key characteristics of a Catholic school. She provides some support for the liturgical life of the school and facilitates the relationship between the school and local clergy. The challenge for Governors and senior leaders is to robustly evaluate the schools' Chaplaincy provision in relation to the development of Catholic Life. The lack of shared responsibility by colleagues and pupils in this area is inhibiting progress.

It is evident that Gospel values lead the aspirations of the school but there is potential for further development. For example, the beautiful imagery in St Bernard's Stations of the Cross is not used imaginatively throughout the school. In a similar way, the chapel is well equipped but not all pupils and staff perceive it as

central to the life of the school. Staff and pupils do appreciate the generous accommodation St Bernard's has to offer and pupils show great respect for their surroundings. Although there are some good examples of imagery and scriptural text this could be used more around school.

Pupils are treated with the utmost dignity. This, in turn, creates a culture in which there is a profound sense of belonging to family of St. Bernard's. Pupils know to whom they can turn for help. Tellingly, this is the Pastoral team. Pastoral provision is well resourced and benefits from a dedicated and professional team whose pastoral heart draws strength from the teaching of Jesus Christ. An individual, tailored approach means that the most vulnerable within the community are embraced. One parent described her child's time at St. Bernard's as a 'wonderful experience' and stated that this was because of the school's Catholic Ethos.

## PART B: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education
- How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education
- The quality of provision in Religious Education

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Overall, the quality of Religious Education is good. The vast majority of pupils enjoy Religious Education and they recognise its value. Pupils are engaged and attentive and want to achieve. They are loyal to their teachers. Pupils, on the whole, enjoy their Religious Education lessons and can explain the subject's importance. One student interviewed said 'I love my RE teacher, she is kind and caring; she's like my mum.'

In Religious Education, pupils are expected to have a clear viewpoint, underpinned by sound reasoning and understanding, which is evidence based. Pupils are equally challenged to explore all opinions in the light of Holy Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. They speak confidently about the challenges of religious experience and are showing an increasing awareness of the demands and rigour of religious commitment in an increasingly secular world.

Most learners make good progress given their prior attainment. All but a handful of pupils are entered for GCSE RE and results are consistently good and comparable to outcomes in English and maths. By comparison to Catholic Schools in England and Wales attainment is outstanding and, because of St Bernard's high entry, good in comparison to national outcomes for all schools. Gaps in performance for able, vulnerable and SEND pupils are being addressed. Greater challenge in lessons would help to ensure that the most able achieve their very best. The school's information on Year 11 students' current attainment and progress indicates that projections remain positive and are expected to be just above existing national benchmarks.

Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education is good. The subject leader has a clear vision for the department that is based upon the school's Catholic mission. The leadership of the department is well established. Leaders are passionate for their subject and a loyal, dedicated team supports them. This gives confidence that the rigour within the department will continue to develop. Working relationships within the department are very supportive; sharing of resources including classroom support is good and there is an appropriate division of responsibilities.

Consistent quality assurance procedures are in place to support and develop the impact of teaching and learning but these procedures should include more comparisons sought from outside of St Bernard's.

The school fully satisfies the requirements laid down by Bishops' Conference guidelines. Pupils are taught in sets in Years 9, 10 and 11. The mixed ability groupings in Year 7 & 8 require skilled differentiation by teachers, but progress is not yet strong for pupils of all abilities.

Pupils have a developing understanding of Catholic faith and their own personal response to questions of what it is to be fully human. The Religious Education curriculum provides for the academic, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of most of the pupils but some pupils struggle to describe this in the light of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the Church. Schemes of work are in place and used effectively. Key Stage 3 (at St Bernard's mainly Year 7 & 8) schemes are currently being modified in the light of the changes to the Key Stage 4 (mainly Year 9 & 10 & 11) curriculum. The department facilitates enrichment opportunities where pupils can boost their knowledge and understanding; this illustrates a strong commitment from the teaching team.

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good and in some cases, outstanding. Where the best teaching was seen, lessons are well planned with stimulating materials and probing questions. In one lesson there was a good starter activity delivered in a timely fashion followed by a variety of tasks with pupils taking responsibility for their own learning. This teacher displayed good subject knowledge and pupils used previous knowledge and understanding well to support and develop their ideas. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very strong and pupils are motivated to work hard by staff. Where teaching is not yet good, teachers need to plan learning sequences more carefully and evaluate the impact of activities. In another lesson a potentially exciting activity lacked urgency and so pupils did not make sufficient progress.

Pupils are aware of their progress and know what to do improve. Samples of pupil work sometimes contained inconsistencies with some errors in the presentation of Catholic teaching. There should be a concerted effort to improve subject knowledge in order to remove errors so that pupil progress is not hindered. Evidence shows that the school marking policy is not applied consistently for all groups with strong and weak examples seen. Quality Assurance procedures will address many of these issues but these will need time to embed and impact on outcomes.

## SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity for sustained improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Catholic Life</b>	<b>3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well leaders and managers promote and ensure provision for the Catholic Life of the school through monitoring and evaluation.</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>
<b>Religious Education</b>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The quality of provision in Religious Education.</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>

	<b>Pupil Outcomes</b>	<b>Leadership &amp; Management</b>	<b>Provision</b>	<b>Overall</b>
<b>Catholic Life</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Religious Education</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>