

DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**  
SPIRITUALITY, FORMATION & EDUCATION SERVICE



**S48 Inspection Report**

**St Joseph's Catholic Infant School  
Birtley, Chester le Street**

DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION  
REPORT (Section 48)

on

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE  
SCHOOL AND RELIGIOUS  
EDUCATION

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School: St Joseph's Catholic Infant School

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School URN: 108389

Headteacher: Mrs Valerie Gibson

Chairs of Governors: Mrs Michelle Irwin

Inspector: Mrs Maureen Galbraith

Date of Inspection: 15 and 16 March 2012

This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Séamus Cunningham, the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese, (c.f. Code Canon Law, 804, 806), and for the Governing Body of the school (Education Act 2005, Section 48). The inspection reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school's witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

The inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Joseph's is a smaller than average primary school with three single age classes. It serves a broad mix of social families in the communities of Birtley and Kibblesworth and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Approximately 65% of pupils are baptised Catholics. Most pupils are of white British origin with a small percentage from other ethnic groups.

## **FACTUAL INFORMATION**

### **Pupil Catchment:**

Number of pupils on roll: 71

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 65%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 17%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 0%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 18%

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 14%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 8.5%

### **Staffing**

Number of full time teachers: 4

Number of part time teachers: 0

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 75%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 50%

### **Percentage of learning time given to Religious Education:**

FS 10%

Yr 1 10%

Yr 2 10%

### **Parishes served by the school:**

St Joseph's, Birtley

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**How effective the school is in providing Catholic education**

2

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

2

### MAIN FINDINGS

St Joseph's is a good Catholic school where the mission and ethos of Catholic education underpins all that the school does. Positive relationships foster the development of a community in which inclusion is given a high priority and staff and governors work hard together to ensure that the school's aims and values continue to promote high quality care and education. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good because there is accurate self-evaluation leading to clear, challenging targets and appropriate priorities. Areas for improvement from the last inspection have been addressed. Pupils are very well cared for and from an early age learn about the importance of treating each other with respect and have a good understanding of right and wrong. The school is held in high regard by pupils and parents and has an important place in the parish.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They engage well in lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. Outcomes for pupils are good. From slightly below average starting points, they progress well to attain good standards. Pupils benefit from the range of opportunities offered to contribute to the Catholic life of the school. Pupil participation in prayer and the liturgical life of the school is good and they are developing confidence and independent skills in preparing and leading prayer and collective worship according to their age and capacity. The promotion of spiritual and moral development is good.

The provision for Catholic education is good. The quality of teaching is good overall and this leads to purposeful learning. Assessments are broadly accurate and beginning to have an impact on pupils learning. The use of targets and some clear marking and feedback is beginning to make pupils aware of how to improve their work, but they are not always given time to do so and marking strategies are not always consistent across the school. The Religious Education (RE) curriculum is rich, varied and focused on meeting the needs of most pupils and raising standards. Some more able pupils are not achieving their potential, however, because tasks set are not always sufficiently differentiated. The quality of collective worship is outstanding.

Leadership and management are good. Formal and informal evaluation systems of both curriculum RE and the Catholic life of the school inform strategic planning. Leaders are committed to raising standards in RE and continuing development of the Catholic life of the school. Assessment and monitoring systems are well embedded and give a clear picture of how well pupils are achieving and progressing. Improvements are clearly outlined in the school improvement plan. Governors have a good understanding of what is required in leading the school, they are well informed of strengths and weaknesses and fulfil their responsibilities well. Leaders and managers form good partnerships which benefit pupils' well-being; community cohesion is effectively promoted and excellent links exist with parents, parish and the wider community.

What the school needs to do to improve further:

- raise standards in RE by:
  - ensuring that teachers consistently plan appropriate differentiated tasks to accelerate learning for all pupils, especially the more able
  - embedding consistent marking and feedback strategies throughout school to ensure that they provide support for the next steps in learning
  - giving pupils time to act on advice given by teachers after marking their work

## PUPILS

### **How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups**

2

Outcomes for pupils at St Joseph's are good overall and they achieve well. The majority of pupils speak enthusiastically about RE, have positive attitudes and show high levels of enjoyment. Pupils are becoming increasingly religiously literate and their knowledge, skills and understanding are developing well according to their age and capacity. From slightly below average starting points on entry, most pupils make good progress in RE through foundation stage (FS) and key stage one (KS1) to reach levels of attainment which are above average and in line with other core subjects. Inspection findings show that girls slightly outperform boys. There is little difference between the outcomes of Catholic pupils and those other than Catholic. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported because their needs are accurately identified and support is adapted to meet them. Inspection findings however, indicate pupils with higher abilities are not always presented sufficiently differentiated and challenging tasks across the school. Evidence also indicates little difference between learning about religion (attainment target one (AT1)) and learning from religion (attainment target two (AT2)). Standards overall are good. By the end of KS1, most pupils attain level two (L2), which is the standard expectation of them, with an improving trend in the percentage attaining level three (L3).

Pupils make a good contribution to the Catholic Life of the school and benefit greatly from it. This manifests itself, for example, in the way the school council is involved in decision making, in the buddy and family group systems and fundraising for charities. Pupils can talk about why they fund raise for various charities and the importance of doing so. They can express their views and feelings, show positive relationships, demonstrate a good understanding of right and wrong and understand the need to say "sorry" when necessary. They participate actively in the parish community and understand the importance of some key celebrations throughout the liturgical year.

Pupils response to and participation in collective worship is good. They have a good grasp of what worship is about and are at ease when praying with their school community. They know the difference between traditional prayers and making up their own private prayers. They participate fully in a variety of acts of worship, sing joyfully and can reflect in silence. They enjoy and are becoming more confident in organising and leading their own worship. Collective worship has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils. They show respect for everyone in their school community and understand that some people have different beliefs.

## PROVISION

### How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education

The quality of teaching in RE is good overall ensuring pupils are interested in their learning and making good progress. Where it is best, learning intentions are clear, success criteria are shared with pupils and questioning is skilful in teacher led tasks. Lessons are carefully planned and build on prior learning but do not consistently use differentiated activities to extend learning for all groups of pupils. Creative activities engage and motivate pupils and facilitate high levels of enjoyment as a result of which, pupils generally apply themselves diligently and achieve well. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and support staff are effectively deployed. There is some evidence that more detailed feedback, both orally and through written comments is beginning to support the next steps in learning.

Assessment is good, improving and in line with Diocesan guidelines. Robust systems provide up to date information about both achievement and progress for all groups of learners and both internal and externally moderated assessments show levelling is now accurate. The school sets challenging targets for most pupils. According to their age and capacity, pupils are aware of their targets and what they should do to achieve them. Progress towards achieving these is monitored regularly and systematically. Teachers' marking is becoming more focused and often gives advice to pupils about how to improve their work; they are not, however, always given time to act on this and marking is inconsistent across the school.

The RE curriculum is good and enriched through a variety of imaginative and well planned strategies and resources. Long and short term planning ensures full coverage of the RE programme and is based on prior experiential learning. Innovative approaches being trialled ensure it is sensitively and appropriately adapted to meet pupils' varying needs. Good use of ICT, art, visits/visitors and focused group work motivate and enrich the learning experience and are impacting positively on standards. The curriculum offers many opportunities for spiritual and moral development and fulfils the requirements of the Bishop's Conference well.

The quality of collective worship provided by the school is outstanding. It is fully inclusive and prayer is central to the life of the school; it is given a very high priority and a wide variety of prayer styles are being developed with music and drama used to engage pupils appropriate to their age and ability. Collective worship is vibrant, reflective and extremely well planned, enabling pupils of all faith backgrounds to take a very active part. They are becoming increasingly skilled at preparing and leading worship as they move through the school. A wide range of opportunities are planned for pupils, staff, governors and the wider community to pray and worship together as a result of which the spiritual needs of the school community are well met.

## LEADERS AND MANAGERS

2

### How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School

Leaders and managers are committed to promoting the Catholic life of the school, through their relationships with others and by example. The Catholic mission is at the heart of school life and pupils' spiritual and moral development at the centre of the school's vision. The headteacher, RE co-ordinators and governors have a clear understanding of the school's role in the mission of the church. Accurate and regular self-evaluation ensures continuous improvement in all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. High quality training, induction procedures and performance management ensure an awareness, understanding and commitment to the strong Catholic ethos. As a result pupils have a good understanding of this and actively support it.

The monitoring and evaluation of the provision for RE is good, as a result of which leaders and managers have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Outcomes for pupils are good with monitoring, assessment and tracking systems having a positive impact on pupils' learning, progress and standards. The skills of the RE team complement each other well and all staff are kept informed about priorities identified from a range of systematic monitoring activities undertaken to evaluate the provision and outcomes for pupils. Leaders have well targeted plans in place which are under constant review to ensure maximum impact for pupils.

Governors provide effective challenge and support regarding the Catholic life of the school. They are committed to working together, are gaining in experience and have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas of development putting the well-being and needs of the children at the centre of their work. Governors discharge their statutory and canonical duties effectively. They have a very positive relationship with staff, pupils and their families and are actively involved in the school and parish communities. They are aware of the school's performance in RE, curriculum provision and quality of teaching and what needs to be done to raise standards further.

Leaders effectively develop partnerships with other providers and organisations. A range of partnership activities with, for example, St Cuthbert's Care, People's Kitchen and parish links with a school in Uganda, make a good contribution to pupils' well-being and the Catholic life of the school. Leaders and managers also ensure that links are well established with other Catholic primary schools and high schools, the diocese, parish and local organisations to provide rich and varied opportunities facilitating the personal and professional development of staff and enabling pupils to enjoy and achieve in a number of areas which the school alone could not provide.

Leaders and managers' promotion of community cohesion is good. The school is a highly inclusive community with a clear, shared vision and strong sense of belonging. Many opportunities exist for groups and individuals to engage and collaborate with each other. The RE curriculum promotes attitudes of respect, tolerance and justice for all faiths and those with none. Acts of worship are inclusive and everyone's spiritual identity respected. Leaders are good role models. They respect difference, value diversity and ensure equal opportunities for all. In this predominately white British community, leaders ensure pupils have a global awareness. This is promoted well, ensuring an appropriate understanding of rights and responsibilities in a diverse society.

## SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1 Outstanding    Grade 2 Good    Grade 3 Satisfactory    Grade 4 Unsatisfactory

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	<b>2</b>
How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in RE</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ pupils' standards of attainment in RE</li> </ul>	<b>2</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 pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<b>How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education</b>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in RE</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in RE</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the extent to which RE curriculum meets pupils' needs</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the quality of collective worship provided by the school</li> </ul>	<b>1</b>
<b>How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School</b>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for RE and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well-being</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion.</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>