



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**  
— DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION —

## **Section 48 Inspection Report**

**Sacred Heart RCVA Primary School**

**Convent Road Fenham Newcastle upon Tyne**

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION  
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

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**School:** Sacred Heart RCVA Primary

**Address:** Convent Road  
Fenham  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE4 9XZ

**Telephone Number:** 0191 274 6695

**Email address:** kevin.foster@sacredhprim.newcastle.sch.uk

**School URN:** 108504

**Headteacher:** Mr Kevin Foster

**Chair of Governors:** Mr David Harrison

**Inspector:** Mrs Lucie Stephenson

**Date of Inspection:** 4 & 5 July 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**

Sacred Heart RCVA is an average sized Catholic primary school serving the community of Fenham in Newcastle upon Tyne. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. However, a significant proportion of pupils are from a variety of cultural backgrounds, most of whom speak English as an additional language. The majority of pupils are baptised Catholics. The school serves the parish of St Robert's, Fenham with a small number of pupils coming from four neighbouring parishes. Pupils enter school with skills generally below age related expectations.

## **FACTUAL INFORMATION**

### **Pupil Catchment:**

Number of pupils on roll: 210

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 94%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 4%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 2%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 0%

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 24%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 9.5%

### **Staffing**

Number of full time teachers: 8

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 4	10%
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Yr 1	10%	Yr 5	10%
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Yr 2	10%	Yr 6	10%
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Yr 3	10%		
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### **Parishes served by the school:**

St Robert's, Fenham

English Martyrs, North Fenham

St Joseph's, Elswick

St Michael's, Elswick

St Matthew's, Ponteland

# OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic education

1

The school’s capacity for sustained improvement

1

## MAIN FINDINGS

Sacred Heart is an outstanding Catholic school. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of year six (Y6), they are attaining consistently above average standards. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities and take an active role in leading and developing the Catholic life of the school, which is rooted in the educational tradition of the Society of the Sacred Heart. Leaders and managers have made a significant contribution to developing a school that has a shared sense of mission amongst the whole community. Staff, parents, pupils and governors are justifiably proud to be associated with this school. The drive for continuous improvement in all aspects of school life has built on previous performance. Excellent relationships are a key strength of the school. The school’s capacity for sustained improvement in all areas is outstanding because its thorough and accurate self-evaluation has resulted in clear, challenging targets and appropriate priorities.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school, they are highly motivated and have excellent attitudes to learning. Standards attained in Religious Education (RE) are above average and all groups of pupils make good progress. Pupils are well supported in their learning by the effective use of additional adults. They benefit greatly from the highly impressive range of opportunities offered to contribute to the Catholic life of the school. School is rooted in prayer and level of pupil participation and engagement in the prayer and liturgical life of the school is very high with many pupils developing independent skills in preparing prayer and worship. Their spiritual and moral development is outstanding.

The school provides a good Catholic education. Teaching and learning in RE is effective in engaging pupils and ensuring that they learn well. Assessment, monitoring and tracking procedures are impacting positively on attainment and progress. The RE curriculum is varied and is focused on raising standards. The quality of collective worship is outstanding. Staff are excellent role models for the pupils and offer an impressive variety of prayer and worship opportunities. Personal development and care of pupils are outstanding.

Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body are committed to striving for excellence, rooted in the educational traditions of the Society of the Sacred Heart. This ensures that all pupils are exceptionally well cared for, known and respected as individuals and are highly motivated to make good progress. The Catholic ethos permeates Sacred Heart RCVA Primary School where the drive and ambition for each person to achieve all they can is tangible. The headteacher has empowered a highly talented, confident, skilled senior leadership team who work exceptionally well and effectively together to drive the school’s vision forward. Leaders ensure morale and expectations are extremely high. Professional development of all staff is given high priority resulting in staff who are committed to the best possible outcomes for pupils. The conscientious and knowledgeable subject leader, who has an excellent overview of the whole school, supports the headteacher very well.

## What the school needs to do to improve further

- Raise standards in RE by:
  - ensuring teachers plan differentiated tasks to enable all pupils, especially the more able, to achieve higher levels of attainment;

- ensuring that marking consistently provides information to pupils about how to improve, their work and that pupils are given time to respond;
- developing pupils' skills in self-assessment by embedding 'I Can' statements into assessment procedures throughout the school.

## PUPILS

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

1

From below average starting points on entry to school, pupils make good progress in RE throughout the foundation stage (FS) and key stage one (KS1) and this progress continues in key stage two (KS2). Achievement is good throughout the school and all groups of learners, including boys and girls, ethnic minority pupils and English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupils, Catholics and those other than Catholic; those with learning difficulties and those who are gifted and talented achieve equally well and demonstrate good quality learning according to their capabilities. Pupils are becoming increasingly religiously literate and their knowledge, skills and understanding are developing well according to their age and capacity. Standards overall are above average. Trends over time and current evidence show continuous improvement. By the end of KS1, given their starting points, the vast majority of pupils achieve the standards expected of them and a very small minority exceeds that. By the end of KS2 almost all pupils achieve level four (L4) with a small minority achieving level five (L5). Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their lessons, show high levels of enjoyment in learning and have very positive attitudes.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school and benefit greatly from it. They take full advantage of the many opportunities offered to them both within and beyond the classroom and can articulate how the school is helping them to become better people. The rich diversity in school and unique position of belonging to the worldwide family of Sacred Heart schools ensures that the pupils understand that they belong to a large, international family of schools. Pupils have numerous opportunities to take ownership of this, including participation in 'Fanning the Flame Club' and use their pupil voice wisely, confidently and sensibly. They show a developed awareness of compassion, forgiveness and justice and display mature and positive attitudes to school life. They have a good understanding of the liturgical year and of key celebrations during the year.

Pupils' response to and participation in collective worship is outstanding. They take part in, lead and prepare prayer and liturgy with ease, confidence and enthusiasm. Acts of worship enable a high level of active pupil participation in a variety of ways. Pupils enjoy a variety of different prayer styles from spiritual days of reflection, to providing opportunities for quiet time for individual reflection, whole class and school prayer time. The pupils respond very positively to being encouraged to 'be still in the presence of the Lord'. Many older pupils are acquiring a range of skills, which enable them to lead a liturgy and prayer, including Rosary sessions, independently. In both small and large gatherings, pupils are respectful, reverent, reflective and prayerful.

# PROVISION

## How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education

The majority of teaching in RE is good. A wide range of teaching styles, good questioning and creative use of activities such as role-play, drama and use of art make learning exciting and engage and motivate pupils. Lessons are planned to build on prior learning and pupils' capabilities. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and support staff are effectively deployed. Assessment is now part of the planning process with teaching directly linked to focused assessments. This has contributed significantly to the rate of progress made in recent years. Marking is both evaluative and informative and is most effective when giving pupils feedback on their next steps in learning.

The effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance is good and is successfully driving improvements in standards of RE. The school has detailed, accurate assessment information, which is used well to inform teaching and learning. The tracking of individuals and cohorts provides a clear picture of progress and attainment. All staff are actively involved in the moderation process; results of which are used to track progress. The introduction of 'I can' statements is beginning to give pupils the opportunity to assess and discuss their own work and progress.

The school provides a good RE curriculum, which is enriched through cross curriculum links and partnerships developed through the worldwide family of Sacred Heart Schools. This leads to learning that is stimulating and memorable and a curriculum that is suitable and matched to the needs of the majority of pupils' capabilities. Long, medium and short term planning builds on prior learning, ensures full coverage of the RE programme and meets the needs of the Bishops' Conference well. The school provides stimulating opportunities to motivate and inspire pupils. The RE curriculum provides many opportunities which impact significantly on pupils' spiritual and moral development. Enrichment activities enhance pupil engagement with the community and have a high uptake.

The quality of collective worship provided by the school is outstanding. Prayer is central to the life of the school and is given the highest priority. Acts of worship are well planned, vibrant and reflective with active participation by pupils. The range, variety and quality of prayer styles offered to pupils is excellent. The school and parish together provide good liturgical formation. Teachers show a high level of skill, imagination and creativity in leading worship and provide very good role models for pupils who are becoming increasingly skilled at preparing and leading worship independently. Some whole school acts of worship have had significant impact on parents, parishioners and the wider community. The spiritual needs of all pupils are very well met by the school's high quality provision.

# LEADERS AND MANAGERS

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

Leaders and managers are outstanding in their promotion of Catholic values and principles. Rooted in the educational tradition of the Society of the Sacred Heart, the Catholic mission of the school is given the highest priority and underpins all aspects of school life. Leaders demonstrate a clear focus on the promotion of the human person, developing all pupils so they come to really know that they are unique individuals, known and loved by God. The dedication, drive and energy of the headteacher, senior leaders and governors are an inspiration to the whole school community. Accurate and regular self-evaluation at all levels within the school is a reflection of comprehensive, rigorous monitoring, analysis and self-challenge. High quality staff training and induction and the value placed on relationships and the care and concern all members of the school community show one another is a major strength of the school and demonstrates a strong commitment to the Catholic ethos of the school. As a result, pupils have a secure understanding of the school’s mission and are actively involved in determining and supporting it.

The leadership and management of RE is outstanding. The deputy headteacher has a clear sense of direction and purpose in curriculum RE, which is recognised as the core subject of the curriculum. She is supported well by the headteacher and is ensuring that high standards are constantly striven for, leading the subject very well. Professional development for all staff is a high priority. They are aware of strengths and areas for development and the school improvement plan clearly informs the way forward. The efficient and effective co-ordinator ensures that accurate and consistent monitoring, assessment and tracking systems are in place and these are having significant impact on pupils’ learning, progress and standards.

The governing body makes a highly significant contribution to the work and Catholic dimension of the school, acting as ‘critical friend’ in evaluating the life and work of Sacred Heart RCVA Primary School. They discharge their canonical duties extremely effectively. The governors are highly visible in school and are integral to the life of school. They monitor the school’s data and information, review the school’s work and act upon their findings. They are very well informed, placing the well-being and all round development of pupils at the heart of their work, giving of their time generously and leading a wide variety of extra curriculum activities. They have a good understanding of stakeholder views and know what needs to be done to raise standards further.

Leaders and managers develop highly effective partnerships with other providers and organisations. Undoubtedly the most significant partnership involves the active participation in the Worldwide Network of Sacred Heart Schools, impacting significantly on pupils’ achievement and well-being and on the Catholic life of the school. Well established links with other Catholic primary schools, the diocese, the parish and other local organisations provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to enjoy, achieve and further develop as well as promoting the personal and professional development of staff.

Leaders and managers’ promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. The school is a highly inclusive community with a clear, shared vision and a strong sense of belonging. Leaders respect difference, value diversity and ensure equal opportunities for all. Many opportunities exist for pupils to engage and collaborate with each other. Pupils are offered a wide range of opportunities to collaborate and engage with those from different backgrounds locally, nationally and globally. As a result pupils recognise, respect and celebrate differences and have a strong sense of the common good. They demonstrate an excellent awareness and understanding of their global responsibilities.

## 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>1</b>
<b>The school's capacity for sustained improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups</b>	<b>1</b>
• how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in RE	<b>2</b>
❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress	<b>2</b>
❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress	<b>2</b>
❖ pupils' standards of attainment in RE	<b>2</b>
• the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school	<b>1</b>
• how well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship	<b>1</b>
<b>How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education</b>	<b>2</b>
• the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in RE	<b>2</b>
• the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in RE	<b>2</b>
• the extent to which RE curriculum meets pupils' needs	<b>2</b>
• the quality of collective worship provided by the school	<b>1</b>
<b>How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School</b>	<b>1</b>
• 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	<b>1</b>
• how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for RE and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils	<b>1</b>
• 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	<b>1</b>
• how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well-being	<b>1</b>
• how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion.	<b>1</b>