

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

School: St Benet's RC Primary School

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School URN: 108837

Headteacher: Mrs Ann Blakey

Chair of Governors: Rev Oliver Keyes

Inspectors: Mrs Denise Kendall

Date of Inspection: 8 and 9 June 2010

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 Benet's is a large Catholic primary school that serves the Monkwearmouth area of Sunderland. It draws pupils from the parish of St Benet's and it has a 26 place nursery. St Benet's is held in high regard by parents and the parish.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll:	359
Percentage of pupils baptised RC:	96%
Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations:	4%
Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths:	0%
Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation:	0%
Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups:	2%
Percentage of pupils with special needs:	13%

Staffing

Number of full time teachers:	14
Number of part time teachers:	1
Percentage of Catholic teachers:	75%
Percentage of teachers with CCRS:	35.7%

Percentage of learning time given to RE:

FS 10%	Yr 4 10%
Yr 1 10%	Yr 5 10%
Yr 2 10%	Yr 6 10%
Yr 3 10%	

Parishes served by the school:

St Benet's, Monkwearmouth, Sunderland
St Hilda's, Sunderland
St Joseph's Sunderland
St Patrick's Sunderland
St John Bosco Sunderland
Immaculate Heart of Mary Sunderland
St Cecilia Sunderland

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic education

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

MAIN FINDINGS

St Benet's is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. It has a caring and supportive ethos and all staff work hard together as a team to ensure that pupils have the best possible care. The mission statement underpins the work of the school and is clearly put into action each day by both staff and pupils, providing the whole community with opportunities to develop and grow in faith together. Staff and pupils are courteous to one another and this leads to a sense of respect and value for each individual.

Outcomes for all pupils are good. They participate fully in the many and varied learning opportunities that are given to them and enjoy their learning. Pupils enter the school with skills broadly in line with the national average. They make good progress throughout all key stages and achieve at least expected outcomes. Pupils talk confidently about the religious topics they study and their work is of a consistent high quality. Pupils' contribution to the Catholic life of the school is good. They show interest in the religious life of others and have a good understanding that religious belief and spiritual values are important for many people. They are considerate to others and caring to anyone in need. Pupils' response to and participation in the school's collective worship is outstanding. They act with reverence and are keen to participate.

The school's provision for Religious Education is good. Teaching is good and a range of good quality resources and artefacts are used to enhance the experiences offered to pupils. A range of teaching strategies are used throughout the school and these contribute to pupils' enjoyment of Religious Education. However, teachers' marking is not used consistently enough to provide information to pupils about the next steps in their learning. Differentiation is mainly by outcome. Assessment procedures are well developed and are used effectively to support and inform planning thus improving outcomes for pupils. The Religious Education curriculum meets the needs and interests of learners well and the quality of collective worship provided by the school is outstanding.

Leadership and management of the school are good. There is a clear vision which is shared by all. The monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life of the school is informal. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provides very good support. The school has good relationships with the parents, the parish and the local community and develops excellent partnerships to promote Catholic learning and pupil well-being. The promotion of community cohesion by leaders and managers is outstanding and a strength of the school.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good in all areas. The school's own self-evaluation is accurate thus ensuring that strengths are celebrated and areas for improvement identified and addressed. Areas for improvement highlighted in the last report have been improved significantly and there is clear evidence that a challenging curriculum is now

provided for more able pupils particularly in Years Five and Six. This has had a significant impact in improving standards in Religious Education at the end of Key Stage 2.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- improve teaching and learning by:
 - taking more opportunities to differentiate work by task as well as by outcome;
 - ensuring that teachers' marking provides information to pupils about the next steps in their learning.
- ensure consistency in practice throughout the school by:
 - developing more formal procedures for all leaders and managers to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in Religious Education;
 - developing more formal procedures for all leaders and managers to monitor and evaluate the Catholic life of the school.

PUPILS

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

2

Outcomes for all pupils at St Benet's are good and they achieve well. Pupils have good attitudes, enjoy their learning and are keen to do well. There are no notable differences between groups of learners and arrangements are in place to ensure that whenever necessary, pupils are supported in order to make progress according to their needs and capabilities. Pupils enter the school broadly in line with national average starting points. They come from a range of backgrounds. However, many have a limited knowledge of religion prior to starting school. Pupils' attainment is good at the end of all key stages. Assessment data indicates that the majority of pupils will reach the expected standard by the end of Key Stage 2 and that a small minority will achieve level 5. All pupils make good progress in Religious Education throughout all key stages. This progress has been much more rapid in recent years particularly in upper Key Stage 2 where pupils are given a variety of opportunities to achieve at the highest levels. Pupils are able to talk confidently about their work in Religious Education. They show good understanding and their knowledge and skills are developing according to their age and ability.

Pupils make a good contribution to the Catholic life of the school and clearly benefit from this. They are able to talk about the importance of acting fairly and justly and know that in doing this they are following Jesus. They participate fully in a number of key events and liturgies which celebrate the liturgical year. Pupils take on a range of responsibilities for caring for each other. This is particularly evident in the 'buddy' system between the Reception Year and Year 6. The older children not only care for the younger ones at lunchtime but also prepared a special Mass for both year groups and parents to share together at the beginning of the year. This celebration was valued by many parents as well as the children and this has helped further develop their overall contribution to the Catholic life of the school. Pupils appreciate their learning about other faiths and know that religion is important to many people whose beliefs are different from their own. They show an understanding of the need to forgive and to be forgiven and have a good understanding of right and wrong.

Pupils' participation in and response to collective worship is outstanding. They act reverently, sing enthusiastically and remain reflective and focused during prayer time. They are able to contribute confidently to invitations to pray individually in collective worship. Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school. 'Prayer Walls' are a particular feature of the school and these provide pupils with many opportunities to pray and reflect in different ways. The pupils are developing the skills to plan and lead collective worship and prayer. Collective worship has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils.

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

2

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good with some outstanding elements, particularly in upper Key Stage 2 and ensures that all pupils make good progress. Teachers in all key stages have high expectations. They ensure that a range of teaching styles are used and this together with quality and imaginative resources results in good learning taking place. Staff plan and assess in teams to ensure that pupils of all abilities are challenged at the highest level. Teachers have good subject knowledge which is demonstrated in both the planning and teaching in all key stages. Differentiation by task is emerging in some year groups but is not yet embedded or developed sufficiently across the school.

Assessment is well developed and is an integral part of the planning process. Assessments are accurate and are moderated regularly within school as well as annually as part of the diocesan process which enables teachers to set challenging targets for all pupils. Progress is tracked termly and this ensures that pupils at all levels are achieving all that they are capable of achieving. Effective marking is developing but is not yet used consistently throughout the school in order to develop pupils' awareness of the next steps in their learning.

The Religious Education curriculum is good at meeting the needs of pupils and fulfils all the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. The curriculum is rich and varied and engages pupils well. Resources are used effectively and pupils have the opportunity to participate through drama, role play, art and music. Visitors to school have enhanced learning, interest and enthusiasm. Pupils can articulate their knowledge and understanding of other faiths and share with others about Catholic life and practice. Pupils are provided with a good range of opportunities to enrich their spiritual and moral development.

The quality of collective worship provided by the school is outstanding with prayer being at the heart of the school. It is well planned and meets the spiritual needs of all pupils. A range of formal and informal opportunities to pray are offered to the pupils. Adults and pupils pray together frequently and are comfortable in sharing prayer intentions with one another. The school takes the opportunity to celebrate important events in the Church's year and this adds to the quality of the experiences in which the pupils participate. The 'Prayer Walls' visible in many areas of the school ensure that prayer is an important part of the daily life of the school.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

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

2

Leaders and managers are very effective in supporting and developing the Catholic life of the school. They promote Catholic values and principles well and the Catholic ethos underpins all aspects of the life of the school. The school mission statement is visible throughout the school and is clearly acted upon by all the community. The school leadership team, Religious Education co-ordinators and governors have a clear understanding of the school's role in the mission of the Church. Together they ensure that Catholic values are given high priority and that pupils experience a rich, broad and balanced curriculum. Many informal opportunities are taken by governors and the leadership team to monitor the Catholic life of the school and areas for development and improvement are identified and addressed. However, more formal procedures to monitor and evaluate the Catholic life of the school to ensure consistency in practice throughout the school are lacking.

The monitoring and evaluation of the provision for Religious Education is good. The leadership team and co-ordinators ensure that good assessment and tracking systems are in place and these have had a good impact on raising standards in recent years, particularly in upper Key Stage 2. Here there is clear evidence of pupils being challenged to achieve at the highest level. The commitment of all leaders has ensured that outcomes for pupils continue to improve throughout the school. More formal systems to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in Religious Education to ensure uniformity of practice are underprovided.

The governors are fully involved in the Catholic life of the school and make a significant contribution to the work of the school. They carry out their duties efficiently, ensuring that they are both supportive and challenging. They are knowledgeable and well informed and know what needs to be done in order for the school to develop further.

There are excellent partnerships with parents, parish and the wider community resulting in a variety of activities which improve the school's provision. These activities also impact significantly on pupils' achievement and well-being and notably promote Catholic learning.

The school makes an outstanding contribution to the promotion of community cohesion. It is central to the work of the school. There is a strong commitment within the school to serving others through the development of both local and international partnerships. These partnerships include close working relationships and opportunities to share professional development opportunities with the neighbouring community school. Religious Education provides opportunities for pupils to learn about other faiths and traditions and to respect difference. The pupils value these opportunities and speak enthusiastically of how this work has helped them to develop a greater understanding and appreciation of other faiths and cultures. This ensures that the inclusion of all is at the heart of the school providing pupils with many opportunities to develop their awareness and understanding of moral and global issues. Religious Education and collective worship make an excellent contribution to community cohesion.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

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

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