

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION  
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

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**School:** St Bede's RC Primary

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County Durham  
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**School URN:** 114243

**Headteacher:** Mrs Louise Keenan

**Chair of Governors:** Mrs Mary Maplesden

**Inspector:** Sr Sheila McNamara rscj

**Date of Inspection:** January 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> 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 Bede's is a smaller than average primary school serving the parish of St. Bede's in Sacriston, a former mining community in County Durham. The small numbers of pupils are taught in mixed age classes until upper Key Stage 2. The cohorts in each year group are variable. Most of the pupils are baptised Catholics and from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is higher than the national average. The school is held in very high regard by parents and parishioners.

## **FACTUAL INFORMATION**

### **Pupil Catchment:**

Number of pupils on roll: 81

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 88%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 10%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 1%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 1%

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 1%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 27%

### **Staffing**

Number of full time teachers: 5

Number of part time teachers: 1

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 83.3%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 50% (1 teacher undertaking CCRS currently)

### **Percentage of learning time given to RE:**

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| 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 Bede's, Sacriston

**Overall Effectiveness**

2

**Capacity for sustained improvement**

2

## **MAIN FINDINGS**

This is a good Catholic school. It has a strong ethos rooted in Catholic values which permeate all of school life. The well-being and all round personal development of each pupil is at the heart of the school's vision and is reflected in the strong sense of pastoral care. Very good relationships at all levels are a strength of the school. The committed headteacher, very ably supported by a competent deputy, lead a motivated team of staff who provide good role models resulting in confident, articulate pupils who know what it means to belong to a Catholic community.

Outcomes for pupils are good. They thrive in the caring, family atmosphere the school provides and are becoming confident, mature, independent learners with positive attitudes to school life. All groups of pupils are achieving well in Religious Education and making good progress. Standards at present are broadly average but accurate indicators and predictions show capacity to improve. Pupils benefit well from the good opportunities given to contribute to the Catholic life of the school and are developing useful skills and positive attitudes for life in school and beyond. Their participation and involvement in acts of worship are good and developing well. In a variety of prayerful settings they respond with reverence and respect. The acquiring of skills to prepare and lead worship themselves is at an early stage of development.

The school provides a good Catholic education. Religious Education is given high priority and pupils are encouraged to be independent and to think for themselves. The quality of teaching is consistently good across the school and this leads to purposeful learning and motivated, interested, engaged pupils. Assessment and academic guidance is satisfactory. Although well-embedded systems are in place which give a clear picture of how well pupils are achieving and progressing, no formal steps for development in Religious Education are outlined in the school improvement plan. The Religious Education curriculum provided meets pupils' needs well and some good adaptations are made enhancing learning and skills. The development of collective worship has been given priority recently and significant impact is evident in a reasonably short time enhancing the quality of what the school provides.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very well together in leading a committed staff with a common vision of wanting the best for each pupil. Strong team work, knowledgeable, capable staff, very good relationships and well established systems result in the school having a good capacity to improve. Formal and informal monitoring of the Catholic life of the school have ensured previous areas for development have been addressed and improved and is informing clear plans for improvement. In Religious Education, however, although accurate systems are in place for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and recording pupils' progress, the findings are not as yet evident in strategic future planning to raise standards. Governors discharge their responsibilities well. The development of

partnerships with other schools and organisations is a strength of the school and results in positive outcomes for pupils. The good promotion of community cohesion enables pupils to have a well developed awareness of difference and positive attitudes of tolerance and respect.

**What the school needs to do to improve further:**

- ensure pupils are enabled to prepare and lead worship themselves;
- raise standards in Religious Education by:
  - using assessment data to set challenging targets for pupils so they know how to improve
  - formulating a strategic, structured long-term plan for improvement which is periodically monitored and evaluated to ensure impact on outcomes for pupils.

## PUPILS

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

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Pupils show good levels of enjoyment, engagement and enthusiasm for Religious Education and have mature, positive attitudes to learning. They are becoming increasingly religiously literate and many are very articulate and reflective in their oral responses. Pupils' knowledge and skills in Religious Education are developing well throughout the school and in lessons they work calmly and collaboratively and take a pride in their work. Standards of attainment overall are average. By the end of Key Stage 1, a large majority of pupils achieve the standards expected of them. Trends over time show that at the end of Key Stage 2 a large majority of pupils achieve expected standards, though demonstrable current evidence shows that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are improving and those pupils capable of achieving higher levels are on track to do so. From below average starting points on entry to school, the vast majority of pupils make good progress throughout Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and this consistent progress continues in Key Stage 2. Achievement, therefore, is generally good throughout the school and all groups of learners, including the more able and less able, Catholics and those other than Catholic, achieve equally well and demonstrate good quality learning according to their capabilities.

Pupils make a good contribution to the Catholic life of the school and benefit greatly from it. They take on responsibilities willingly and eagerly and are able to articulate why they behave and act in the way they do because they belong to a Catholic school and report 'the Gospel tells us'. They benefit well from the reflective role-modelling the school community has developed. This enables them to express themselves well about their strong sense of belonging to 'a big family', their developed sense of forgiveness and their increasing awareness of those less fortunate than themselves. They are developing a good range of skills and attitudes which will serve them well now and in the future.

Pupils' response to and participation in collective worship is good. Because this has been a focused area of development and improvement in the life of the school, pupils are developing a good awareness of a variety of styles and forms of prayer and their liturgical formation is developing well. They participate with a good level of interest and engagement and their response in both small and large prayerful gatherings is respectful, reverent, and reflective. They speak of feeling calm and peaceful after times of worship and enjoy taking part. Many are just beginning to acquire skills in planning and leading worship more independently. The prayer life of the school makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

## PROVISION

### How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

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The quality of teaching in Religious Education is consistently good across the school resulting in good quality learning. Lessons are well planned and the range of pupils' capabilities are taken into account when planning some effective and imaginative activities. A variety of teaching strategies are employed to engage pupils well. Good pupil/teacher relations, a range of questioning styles and effective use of ICT enable good levels of pupil motivation and concentration. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and this contributes well to the good progress pupils make across the school. Marking and feedback to pupils does not always identify how they can improve and move on in their learning.

Assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education is satisfactory. Assessment procedures are embedded in the school's systems and the school has a broadly accurate view of pupils' achievement and progress. Assessment, recording and moderation take place regularly and are well documented. Teachers have developed a good level of accuracy in applying the Levels of Attainment. However, although the school can identify what needs to be done to raise standards, at present there is no formal strategic plan for how this information is to be put into practice and raise achievement further for individual pupils. Pupils are unable to say how well they are doing and how to improve. Self-assessment, pupil targets and tracking are at an early stage of development.

The Religious Education curriculum provided by the school is good and generally meets the needs of pupils enabling them to achieve well. Appropriate adaptations are made where necessary, for example, according to pupils' capabilities. Opportunities for pupils to learn from religion and reflect on meaning are particularly well developed. Skills from across the curriculum, including 'Thinking Skills' and 'Philosophy for Children', are incorporated well into the Religious Education curriculum enriching learning. The contribution to and promotion of pupils' spiritual and moral development is a strength of the curriculum. Collaboration with other local Catholic schools to develop the Religious Education curriculum contributes to good outcomes for pupils.

The quality of collective worship provided by the school is good and improving. The prayer life of the school is given high priority. As a result of staff training and a focused drive to enhance the prayer and liturgical life of the school, improvements have been made over time so that staff and pupils now have a developing liturgical sense and know what constitutes a good variety of worship. Evidence shows a range of different opportunities and styles of worship are provided by the school engaging and involving pupils, and sometimes parents and the parish, well. Recently purchased resources are used to good effect. As yet, pupils are not offered sufficient opportunities to prepare and lead worship themselves but a knowledgeable and able staff are well placed to develop pupil skills further.

## LEADERS AND MANAGERS

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

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The Catholic life of the school is given high priority by leaders and managers and, along with spiritual and moral development, is promoted well. Leaders are strongly committed to Catholic values and principles and these lie at the heart of the school's vision and mission. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher strive to ensure that their vision of all pupils 'knowing they are grounded in God's love', is shared by the whole school community. A commitment to staff training and induction contribute to the strong Catholic ethos. Staff and pupils show a good understanding of what it means to belong to a Catholic school and the importance of contributing to the school community. Both informal and formal monitoring of the Catholic life of the school result in priorities for improvement being identified, acted upon and evaluated.

The monitoring and evaluation of the provision for Religious Education are satisfactory. The headteacher, deputy head and Religious Education co-ordinator work well as a team and give Religious Education high priority in the curriculum. The committed co-ordinator supports staff well and keeps them informed of developments and trends. She has worked hard to develop procedures for monitoring the progress of pupils and the quality of teaching and learning and ensure they are in place. These are effective in enabling the school to know its strengths and areas for development. However, at present, these systems are not having enough impact on raising standards. Although leaders can identify what needs to be done, there are no issues for action related to Religious Education in the school improvement plan.

The work of the governing body is good and improving. Governors discharge their canonical and statutory duties effectively. They are supportive of leaders and staff and are confident and questioning in their role. They are committed to reflecting the distinctive Catholic character of the school in their decisions and policies. Relationships with the school community are good and an open-minded culture enables good communication and clarity of roles. They provide an appropriate level of challenge and are developing a more active monitoring role enabling them to be more effective in shaping direction.

Leaders and managers are good at developing partnerships with other providers and organisations and this is a strength of the school. The school is actively committed to partnerships with other local Catholic and community schools enabling pupils to achieve and develop in areas which the school alone could not provide. Shared professional development activities have had a positive impact on teacher knowledge and expertise. Leaders ensure that strong partnerships exist with the parish. The parish and school community collaborate well together in a range of activities and both communities benefit positively from the effective partnership.

Leaders promote community cohesion well. There is a common sense of belonging in the school and all are welcomed in a spirit of equality and respect. Pupils are developing a heightened awareness of the common good and can articulate and explain the impact of their fundraising activities for agencies such as 'CAFOD' and 'St. Cuthbert's Care' on those less fortunate than themselves. The Connecting Classrooms project is enabling pupils to engage with and learn about life in other cultures and to develop positive attitudes to difference. Pupils value their religious identity and are aware that others have different values and

beliefs. Acts of worship respect each one's spiritual identity and the Religious Education curriculum promotes attitudes of tolerance, respect and justice. Work on teaching other faiths has improved significantly since the last inspection.

## SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

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

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| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The school's capacity for sustained improvement</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| • how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education   | <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 Religious Education  | <b>3</b> |
| • the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school   | <b>2</b> |
| • how well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>How effective the provision is for Catholic Education</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| • the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education  | <b>2</b> |
| • the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education  | <b>3</b> |
| • the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs  | <b>2</b> |
| • the quality of Collective Worship provided by the school  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School</b>   | <b>2</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>2</b> |
| • how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils  | <b>3</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>2</b> |
| • how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well-being  | <b>2</b> |
| • how effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion.  | <b>2</b> |