

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



**St Benet's RC Primary School  
Ouston, Chester le Street,  
County Durham**

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION  
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

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<b>School:</b>	St Benet's RC Primary School
<b>Address:</b>	St Benet's Way Ouston Chester le Street County Durham DH2 1QX
<b>Telephone Number:</b>	0191 4105857
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<b>School URN:</b>	114244
<b>Headteacher:</b>	Mr Damian Groark
<b>Chair of Governors:</b>	Joanne Wollaston
<b>Inspector:</b>	Mr Martin Humble
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	10 and 11 January 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 Benet's is an average sized Catholic primary school situated in Ouston near Chester le Street in County Durham. It serves a community with a mix of socio-economic circumstances. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is lower than the national average and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also lower than average.

## **FACTUAL INFORMATION**

### **Pupil Catchment:**

Number of pupils on roll: 251

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 64 %

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 35 %

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 1%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 0%

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 0%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 18%

### **Staffing**

Number of full time teachers: 8

Number of part time teachers: 4

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 73%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 83%

### **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 Joseph's, Birtley

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

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

1

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

1

### MAIN FINDINGS

St Benet's is an outstanding Catholic school. There is a shared vision which promotes the highest expectations for all members of the school community. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors have a total commitment to the ethos and mission of Catholic education. All priorities for improvement since the last inspection have been addressed and the school is continuously striving to maintain the very high standards it is achieving. The school's capacity for sustained improvement in all areas is outstanding because of rigorous and accurate self-evaluation leading to clear challenging targets and appropriate priorities. Excellent relationships within this community and a strong 'team' ethic are key strengths of the school. The school is held in very high regard by the parents, parish community and governors.

Pupils are very enthusiastic about their school community and are very happy to come to school which results in them having a very positive attitude to learning and they achieve very high standards. In Religious Education all pupils make very good progress. From just below average starting points attainment is high by the time pupils reach the end of key stage two (KS2). Pupils benefit greatly from the range of opportunities offered to contribute to the Catholic life of the school. They respond to worship with respect and reverence. The promotion of pupils' spiritual and moral development is outstanding.

The school provides an outstanding Catholic education. Teaching and learning in Religious Education is excellent which enables pupils to make excellent progress. Parents and carers are kept well informed. The Religious Education curriculum provided is rich and varied and is focused on meeting the needs of all pupils and raising standards. Assessment, monitoring and tracking systems, which are continually reviewed and developed, impact positively on pupil progress. The quality of collective worship is good. It is well defined within the school day and pupils are developing skills in the preparation and leading of worship.

The excellent leadership of the headteacher ensures that all pupils are well cared for, known and respected as individuals and well motivated to make excellent progress. Leaders have a clear sense of direction and purpose in curriculum Religious Education which is recognised as the core subject of the curriculum. Professional development of all staff is a high priority. The effective Religious Education co-ordinator is central to the continuing development of the Catholic life of the school and Religious Education. Governors carry out their responsibilities well. The development of effective partnerships and the promotion of community cohesion is outstanding.

### What the school needs to do to improve further

- Provide opportunities for pupils to lead and take more responsibility for the preparation of collective worship.

- Provide opportunities for greater pupil involvement in self-assessment in Religious Education using the 'I can statements'.

## PUPILS

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

1

Pupils endeavour to produce their best work and are interested and very enthusiastic in Religious Education lessons. Pupils are very keen to do well and apply themselves diligently. They speak enthusiastically about their lessons and have very positive attitudes towards their learning. The quality of pupils' learning and progress is outstanding. Attainment at key stage one (KS1) is above average and high by the end of KS2. All pupils make excellent progress across the key stages including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who enter school other than at the normal yearly intake. Their needs are accurately identified and appropriate and effective support is given to meet them. Pupils are becoming increasingly religiously literate and their knowledge, skills and understanding continue to develop well in relation to their age and capability, with challenge suitably set for all.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The very tangible Catholic ethos enables them to participate in shaping activities with a religious character both in the school and their wider community. Pupils are increasingly able to take on responsibility for themselves and others. They take full advantage of the many and varied opportunities the school provides for their personal support and spiritual development. The pupils from foundation stage onwards are enquiring, imaginative, intuitive and have a strong sense of their own identity within their school community. Pupils can discuss their own faith and spirituality with confidence. They know other people have different beliefs and have a thirst to understand other faiths alongside their own. They are able to refer to the teachings of Jesus when talking about how to treat others and how to behave. Pupils are conscious of the needs of others and have a developing sense of justice and concern for others.

Pupils' response to and participation in the school's collective worship is good. They are at ease in their worship and in times of reflection and prayer. They respond thoughtfully, reverently and respectfully to the engaging acts of worship offered to them. At present, pupils participate well in worship but do not regularly prepare and lead worship independently. However, there is evidence of this being at the early stages of development. The pupils sing joyfully and express their thoughts and feelings openly when worshipping within their community. The quality of collective worship has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual and moral development.

# PROVISION

1
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## How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education

Teaching is at least good and outstanding overall. A range of teaching styles, good questioning techniques, clear explanations, well paced lessons and good use of ICT ensure that all pupils are consistently interested in their learning and make excellent progress. Lessons are very stimulating and challenging. The promotion of thinking skills throughout school is evident and has a very positive impact on pupils' ability to listen, question and contribute fully in class discussions. This was very evident in the excellent lesson observed in year 6 (yr6) where the question under discussion was 'Are people born good or evil?' Effectively planned lessons build on prior learning and meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which inspires and promotes confident learners. They have high expectations, setting out to make learning interesting and challenging which impacts positively on pupil enjoyment, engagement and motivation. The support staff throughout the school are very effectively deployed.

Assessment and monitoring procedures are good and give a clear and accurate picture of pupil progress and attainment. Leaders and teachers use this information to good effect, ensuring continuous improvement. Tracking systems for Religious Education have been successfully incorporated into the whole school assessment system which enables the school to focus on ensuring that different groups of pupils achieve equally well. This information is being used effectively by teachers in setting targets for improvement. All have a growing understanding of how to get the pupils where they want them to be. Good guidance ensures that pupils know how well they are doing but the school recognises that pupils' skills in self-assessment needs to be developed further enabling them to become more responsible for their own learning. Pupils are provided with feedback, both orally and written, and the quality of marking to move pupils on in their learning is developing throughout the school.

The Religious Education curriculum is creatively adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. It is enriched through a variety of imaginative and well planned strategies and relevant resources which engage and motivate the pupils. Planning ensures full coverage of the curriculum and identifies pupils' prior learning. The Religious Education curriculum provides excellent opportunities for and impacts very positively on pupils' spiritual and moral development. The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference well.

The quality of collective worship provided by the school is good and ensures that the spiritual needs of all pupils are met. Prayer is central to the life of the school, is fully inclusive, reflective and well planned enabling pupils to take an active part. Some pupils can plan, prepare and lead acts of collective worship but the school recognises the need for further development. There is a range of formal and informal opportunities for prayer, reflection and liturgy and pupils confidently share different forms of prayer in class, school liturgies and school masses. They are very public demonstrations of the ethos of the school. Acts of collective worship have a positive impact on pupils, parents and parishioners. School masses are well attended by the school and parish community. The school choir leads the singing beautifully.

## LEADERS AND MANAGERS

1

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

The school's leadership and management promote the Catholic life of the school very well. The Catholic mission of the school is at the heart of all school life and pupils' spiritual and moral development is central to the school's vision. The deep commitment, drive and energy of the headteacher, is an inspiration to the whole school community. Self-evaluation at all levels within the school is a coherent reflection of rigorous monitoring, thorough analysis and self-challenge. This results in targeted and coherent planning and actions to ensure continuous improvement in all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. High quality induction and staff training have ensured an awareness, understanding and commitment to the very strong Catholic ethos. The school has recently appointed a new school chaplain to continue the good work undertaken by the previous chaplain.

The monitoring and evaluation of the provision for Religious Education is outstanding. The Religious Education co-ordinator has effectively ensured that monitoring, assessment and tracking systems are in place to impact positively on pupils' learning, progress and standards. They accurately inform areas of strength and areas for further development and contribute to the outstanding capacity for improvement. The Religious Education co-ordinator has high expectations, keeps staff well informed and is very supportive. Professional development of staff is tailored to both whole school and individual needs resulting in extremely competent staff that are committed to ensuring that all pupils make good progress. Detailed and well targeted plans are in place and strategies for improvement are implemented very effectively, resulting in outstanding outcomes for all pupils.

Governors provide effective challenge and support regarding the Catholic life of the school. They are well informed on issues relating to Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school, understand well the school's performance in Religious Education and know what needs to be done to ensure continuous improvement of standards. Governors are visible in and around school on a regular basis and are an integral part of this community. Consequently there is a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and they put the well-being and development of the whole child at the centre of their work. Governors discharge their statutory and canonical duties well and are very supportive of leaders and staff.

Leaders and Managers are very successful at developing partnerships with other providers and organisations. The school engages in an excellent range of partnership activities which impact significantly on pupils' achievement and well-being and to the Catholic life of the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher ensure that links are well established with other Catholic primary schools, the Diocese, the parish and local organisations to provide opportunities which enable pupils and staff to enjoy, achieve and develop well. The school has developed a wide range of international partners through the Comenius programme resulting in a deeper global awareness for pupils and staff.

Leaders and Managers' promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. The school is an 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 through the school pastoral system and as a result they recognise, respect and celebrate differences and have a

strong sense of the common good. The school has the International School Award at Gold level. The school has established links in Uganda and holds events to aid local, national and international communities. The school choir has links with the local care home for the elderly.

## 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>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education</li> </ul>	<b>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress</li> </ul>	<b>1</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>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education</li> </ul>	<b>1</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>1</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>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education</li> </ul>	<b>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs</li> </ul>	<b>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the quality of collective worship provided by the school</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<b>How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School</b>	<b>1</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>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils</li> </ul>	<b>1</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>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion.</li> </ul>	<b>1</b>