

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

School: St Mary's RC Primary School

Address: Pemberton Road
Blackhill
Consett
County Durham DH88JD

Telephone Number: 01207502657
Email address: blackhill-st-marys-rc.durham.sch.uk

Headteacher: Mrs Joan Lacey

Chair of Governors: Mr Martin Westgarth

Inspector: Mrs Eileen Lawson

Date of Inspection: 23/24 February 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 Mary's Catholic Primary School is an average sized primary school which serves the parishes of Our Lady Immaculate, Blackhill and Our Lady of the Rosary, Shotley Bridge. Pupils come from a diverse range of social and economic backgrounds and overall levels of deprivation are lower than the national average. A very high proportion of the pupils are baptised Catholics. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is significantly lower than the national average and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also lower than average. Pupils are admitted from a variety of Early Years settings.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll:	247
Percentage of pupils baptised RC:	81%
Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations:	11%
Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths:	4%
Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation:	4%
Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups:	0.8%
Percentage of pupils with special needs:	22%

Staffing

Number of full time teachers:	10
Number of part time teachers:	2
Percentage of Catholic teachers:	80%
Percentage of teachers with CCRS:	70%

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:

Our Lady Immaculate, Blackhill
Our Lady of the Rosary, Shotley Bridge

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic education

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

MAIN FINDINGS

St Mary's is a good Catholic school where the mission and ethos of Catholic education permeates the community and where continuous improvement in every aspect of school life is paramount. There is a shared vision which promotes high expectations amongst all the members of the school community. Emphasis is placed on nurturing in each child a knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith, learning about and from other religions, fostering relationships which reflect values and attitudes of care and respect and enabling each child to reach his or her full potential.

Pupils are happy to come to school, are motivated and have positive attitudes to learning. They are very willing to talk about why school life is so enjoyable for them. They benefit very much from the range of opportunities offered to contribute to the Catholic life of the school. All pupils make good progress and standards of attainment are good overall but more able pupils could achieve higher levels if challenged more. Pupils' participation in the prayer and liturgical life of the school is good and they respond to worship with respect and reverence. They are beginning to develop independent skills in preparing and leading prayer and collective worship. The promotion of spiritual and moral development is good.

The school provides a good Catholic education. Teaching and learning in Religious Education is good and enables pupils to make good progress. The Religious Education curriculum provided is rich and varied and is focused on trying to meet the needs of all pupils and on raising standards. Assessment, monitoring and tracking systems which are continually under review and development, impact positively on pupil progress. The quality of collective worship is good. It is well defined within the school day and staff are good role models for pupils offering a variety of good quality prayer and worship opportunities.

The leadership and management of the school is good and the staff are well supported. A clear vision shared by all ensures a common sense of belonging. Leaders are committed to raising standards and the continuing development of the Catholic life of the school. The Religious Education co-ordinator, well supported by the headteacher, is central to this development. Governors provide effective challenge and support. Strong links exist with parents, parish and the wider community and opportunities to work in partnership for the holistic development of pupils have a positive impact on the Catholic life of the school. Professional development of the staff is a high priority resulting in a competent staff committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve their potential. The school's capacity for sustained improvement in all areas is good because leaders' accurate self evaluation has resulted in clear, challenging targets and appropriate priorities. All priorities for improvement from the previous inspection have been addressed and the school is continuously striving to improve the progress pupils make and the standards they attain.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Raise standards even further by:
 - ensuring that more able pupils are provided with more challenging activities.
- Embed the practice of pupils planning and leading prayer and collective worship throughout the school.

PUPILS

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

2

Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their lessons, display high levels of enjoyment and demonstrate very positive attitudes towards their learning. Standards overall are good. Trends over time, assessment data, pupil tracking systems and work scrutiny all evidence pupils' continuous improvement. By the end of Key Stage 1 standards of attainment are above average. Data for the previous two years indicates that at the end of Key Stage 2 the majority of pupils were achieving Level 4 and a small minority were attaining Level 5. However, inspection findings and current, accurate data confirm that the present Year 6 are now achieving standards of attainment which are above average. A very large majority of the pupils are presently attaining Level 4 and a small minority are already achieving Level 5. From below average starting points on entry to school, all pupils, including boys and girls, Catholics and those other than Catholic, make good progress throughout Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. This continues throughout Key Stage 2. Pupils with special educational needs and/or other disabilities make good progress because their needs are accurately identified and support is adapted to meet them. However, more able pupils are capable of progressing further and attaining higher standards. Pupils are becoming increasingly religiously literate and their knowledge, skills and understanding are developing well according to their age and capacity.

Pupils make a good contribution to the Catholic life of the school and benefit greatly from it. They willingly take on responsibilities and participate in activities within and beyond the classroom which they acknowledge helps them to become better people. They use their pupil voice wisely and confidently. They are reflective and enquiring and understand that religious belief and spiritual values are important to many people. They show interest in the religious beliefs and customs of other people and are comfortable when discussing their own beliefs. They display respect for religious objects in the school. Pupils understand the importance of key celebrations in the liturgical year, in school and in the parish community. They are considerate to others and respond to the needs of people beyond the school. They show awareness of compassion, forgiveness and justice and display positive attitudes to school life.

Pupils' response to and participation in collective worship is good. They act with reverence and are keen to take part in, plan and lead prayer and liturgies. They know what constitutes good worship. They sing joyfully, reflect silently and know a variety of ways of praying. They are at ease when praying in their school community and appreciate what is taking place. They have a good understanding of the religious seasons and are becoming skilled in the use of scripture, religious artefacts, hymns and other forms of prayer. Collective worship contributes positively to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. They show respect for everyone in the school and understand that some have different beliefs and attitudes to spirituality.

PROVISION

How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education

2

Teaching in Religious Education is good. A range of teaching styles, good questioning techniques, clear explanations, well paced lessons and good use of ICT ensure that pupils are consistently interested in their learning and make good progress. Effectively planned lessons build on prior learning and meet the needs of most pupils; however, they do not always include challenging enough activities to enable the more able pupils to achieve higher levels of attainment. Teachers have good subject knowledge which inspires and promotes confident learners. Support staff are effectively deployed. They have high expectations and make learning interesting which impacts positively on pupil enjoyment, engagement and motivation. Pupils are provided with feedback both orally and through quality marking which informs them how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.

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 to where they want them to be. Regular assessment including pupil self-assessment ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

The Religious Education curriculum is creatively adapted to meet the needs of most pupils. It is enriched through a variety of imaginative and well planned strategies and relevant resources which engage and motive the pupils. Long and short-term planning ensures full coverage of the Religious Education curriculum and identifies pupils' prior learning. The school is actively and continuously planning for new ways to enrich the curriculum resulting in obvious enjoyment for pupils. The Religious Education curriculum provides good opportunities for and impacts positively on pupils' spiritual and moral development. The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference well.

The quality of collective worship is good and impacts positively on the spiritual needs of the pupils. It is fully inclusive, reflective and well planned enabling pupils to take an active part. Staff regularly review and plan improvements and recognise the need for pupils to become more skilled in planning and leading acts of collective worship. Prayer is central to the life of the school and this is reflected in the way the pupils are enabled from a very early age, to use special prayer areas sensitively and meaningfully and are given the opportunity to write their own prayers. There is a range of formal and informal opportunities for daily prayer and pupils eagerly and confidently lead prayers in class as well as school liturgies and school masses in church. Acts of collective worship are well attended by parents.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

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

2

Leaders and managers promote and develop the Catholic life of the school well. The Catholic mission is at the heart of school life and pupils' spiritual and moral development are at the centre of the school's vision. Leaders and managers conduct a range of monitoring activities relating to provision and outcomes and their analysis provides a firm basis for accurate diagnosis of the schools' strengths and areas for development. Continuous self-evaluation, both formal and informal together with high quality staff training have developed awareness, understanding and commitment to the school's strong Catholic ethos. High quality staff training ensures improvement in all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. As a result pupils have a high level of understanding of the school's mission and are actively involved in supporting it.

The monitoring and evaluation of the provision for Religious Education are good. Leaders ensure that monitoring, assessment and tracking systems are in place and these are impacting positively on pupil's learning, progress and standards. The effective co-ordinator has incorporated Religious Education into the whole school tracking system for the other core subjects in consultation with the Local Authority adviser. As a result, the progress of targeted groups can be easily monitored. Supported wholeheartedly by the headteacher, she keeps staff well informed, has high expectations and as a result, outcomes for pupils are improving. Detailed, well targeted plans are in place and strategies to effect improvement implemented effectively, resulting in continuously improving outcomes for pupils.

Governors discharge their statutory and canonical duties efficiently. They are involved in the Catholic life of the school and make a positive contribution to the school's work. They show determination in challenging and supporting the school. They are very committed and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The well-being and development of the whole child is at the centre of all their work. They are aware of and understand well the school's performance in Religious Education and know what needs to be done to ensure continuous improvement of standards.

Leaders and managers effectively develop partnerships with other providers and organisations. A wide range of partnership activities impact positively on pupils' achievement and well-being and make a positive contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The headteacher ensures that links are well established with other Catholic Primary Schools, the Comprehensive school, the diocese, the Sion Community, the parish and local organisations, in order to provide opportunities which enable pupils and staff to enjoy, achieve and develop well.

Leaders and managers' promotion of community cohesion is good. The school is an inclusive community with a clear, shared vision and a strong sense of belonging. Leaders respect difference and ensure equal opportunities for all. Pupils from different backgrounds are given the opportunity to work together, enabling them to respect and celebrate difference. Relationships among pupils are good. They are developing a strong understanding of the common good and a commitment to their global responsibilities. Acts of collective worship are inclusive and everyone's spiritual identity is respected. The Religious Education

curriculum promotes positive attitudes of respect and tolerance towards people of all faiths and towards those without any particular religious affiliation.

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	2
How effective the provision is in promoting 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	2
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	2
• how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion.	2