

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



## **Section 48 Inspection Report**

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION  
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

---

<b>School:</b>	St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School and Byron College
<b>Address:</b>	Westway Peterlee SR8 1DE
<b>Telephone Number:</b>	0191 5862291
<b>Email address:</b>	<a href="mailto:stbedesrc@talk21.com">stbedesrc@talk21.com</a>
<b>School URN:</b>	114327
<b>Headteacher:</b>	Mr Paul McKenna
<b>Chair of Governors:</b>	Mr Joe Raine
<b>Lead Inspector:</b>	Miss Maura Regan
<b>Team Inspector:</b>	Mr Philip Robinson
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	23 and 24 May 2011

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 Catholic Comprehensive School and Byron College is an 11-18 educational establishment serving the Catholic community of East Durham. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. However, East Durham is an area of significant deprivation with high unemployment and related challenging social issues. St Bede's is a Humanities specialist school. The majority of pupils are white British. The number of pupils who apply for free school meals is lower than the National average. The number of pupils with special education needs is slightly below average.

## **FACTUAL INFORMATION**

### **Pupil Catchment:**

Number of pupils on roll: 868

Planned Admission Number of Pupils: 150

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 59.1%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 32.6%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 2.2%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 6.1%

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 1%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 13.2%

### **Staffing**

Full time teachers: 56

Part time teachers: 3

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 47.4%

### **RE Department Staffing:**

Number of full time RE teachers: 4

Number of part time RE teachers: 0

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 100%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 50%

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

Yr7 10%                      Yr 10 10%

Yr8 10%                      Yr 11 10%

Yr9 10%

### **Parishes served by the school:**

Our Lady of the Rosary, Peterlee

Our Lady Star of the Sea, Horden

Our Lady of Lourdes, Shotton Colliery

St Cuthbert's, Seaham

St Mary's, Wingate

St Mary Magdalen's, Seaham

St Godric's, Thornley

St Joseph's, Blackhall

St Joseph's, Murton

St William's, Trimdon

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic education

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

### MAIN FINDINGS

St Bede's is a good Catholic school where students and staff work together to create an environment of learning and where every child is valued, encouraged and supported in their learning and in their spiritual and moral development. The distinctive Catholic ethos is tangible and embedded in aspects of school life. This is a clear endorsement of the school's mission statement. Students value the work and commitment of all staff regarding them as motivational and caring, and having a generosity of spirit that results in all pupils feeling valued and respected. The headteacher and senior team are passionate in their drive to nurture a community that encompasses the gospel values of respect, tolerance, forgiveness and reconciliation and as a result the spirit within the school is outstanding.

Outcomes for students in Religious Education are good. Progress is good for all pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and outstanding for those with special educational needs. It is not possible to make a valid judgement on Key Stage 5 due to the size of the cohort. There is a sustained trend of improvement in attainment at both Key Stage 4 and uptake at Key Stage 5. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is good.

The provision for collective worship is outstanding. Assemblies are well prepared and delivered and all students engage in daily acts of worship. The headteacher or senior leaders lead staff in daily prayer setting the tone for the day. Resources are provided by a member of the Religious Education department who has taken on responsibility for Chaplaincy work and these are outstanding and valued by both staff and students. The strong commitment from key staff is a major strength of the chaplaincy team.

The Catholic life of the school and the centrality of Religious Education in the curriculum are of paramount importance to the governors, headteacher and senior team. All work tirelessly to achieve their aims without involvement from the priests of the Deanery and this issue, related to the sacramental life of the school, impoverishes the spiritual development of students.

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

- Improve retention and uptake of 'A' Level Religious Studies.
- Develop more personalised learning for gifted and talented students to ensure consistently good or better outcomes across the full ability range.
- To work with the Diocese to ensure access to the sacraments in school.
- Develop and encourage further links between home, school and parishes.

## PUPILS

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

2

Students at all Key Stages are unanimous in their praise of the department and rank Religious Education amongst their favourite subjects. This enjoyment was evident in the lessons observed. As a consequence students make good progress whilst some make outstanding progress. At Key Stage 3 both attainment and progress are good with a large majority of students meeting their targets. Attainment at Key Stage 3 surpasses that of English in all year groups. At Key Stage 4, the majority (60%) of students make at least expected levels of progress achieving Fischer Family Trust (A) targets for Religious Education. A minority of students (30%) exceed their targets for Religious Education by at least one grade. Students with special educational needs make outstanding progress. 87% of the students on the special education needs register achieved their targets in Religious Education with two thirds of them exceeding their target grade by at least two grades and almost half of them exceeding their target grade by at least three grades. These outcomes represent an achievement that reflects the school's commitment to the most needy. Gifted and more able students however, show slightly lower than expected levels of progress. On average students are achieving slightly above expectation. Attainment in Religious Education was satisfactory in 2010 (58% of the cohort achieving A\*-C) but was a big improvement on the 2009 results and an analysis of trends allow confident predictions that the school will make an equivalent leap forward in its results this year and achieve good results. In addition the departments 18% A/A\* is impressive in the context of the school as a whole and is double that of English with the same cohort. At Key Stage 5, the small number of students makes it difficult to draw conclusions about progress overall but progress and attainment are at least satisfactory. The National Open College Network (NOCN) course leads to successful outcomes for all students and allows the vast majority of the students in sixth form to gain an additional Level 3 qualification.

St Bede's is a vibrant community strengthened and directed by gospel values. The leadership team are clearly committed to fostering a Christian worshipping community built on mutual respect and faith. Students are comfortable with the prayer life of the school and recognise the importance of being part of and contributing to a Christian community. Students are passionate about their community and the contribution that staff make to their well-being. Students believe there is a real sense of community with staff dedicated to ensuring their success. The caring attitude of staff is evident in all aspects of school life and students are effusive in their praise for their work and dedication describing staff as motivational.

Collective worship is a real strength of the school as students from very diverse backgrounds are able, through prayer and reflection, to empathise with others. Staff pray together each morning and this is led by the headteacher or members of the leadership team. This affirms the school as a worshipping community and provides spiritual direction to staff in their caring and nurturing of students. Resources for collective worship are outstanding and are diverse in the issues they cover. Prayer resources are provided for all staff by a member of the Religious Education department and these are used effectively with all year groups. Students value the time they share in acts of collective worship and feel comfortable in praying together and contributing their own personal stories. It is evident that this is embedded practice and a daily feature of school life.

## PROVISION

2

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

Religious Education lessons are consistently well planned and the activities in lessons are designed to engage and inspire students. As a result learning in lessons observed was good and in some cases outstanding. The department has taken questioning as one of its focuses this year and this has led to an increased awareness from teachers of the need to plan questioning and so this aspect of lessons has led to a much greater depth to student responses. The learning support assistants within the department are a particular strength. The collaborative planning and the quality of support received from the special education needs department is very impressive and has led to outstanding outcomes. This excellent practice could be applied with equal success to other groups, for example the gifted and more able students. Planning takes into account prior learning and students use the progress logs to monitor their own learning and where these are used well, pupils show evidence of becoming increasingly independent learners. This good practice needs to be embedded and applied consistently in order to lead all students to become effective managers of their own learning.

The assessment and tracking procedures in Religious Education that are now in place are rigorous and coherent. The use of key assessments and progress logs allow assessment for learning to be central to students' management of their own learning. Where the assessment policies of the department are being fully implemented, progress is rapid. In other cases, the systems are not being used to their best advantage and so progress is not uniformly good. Monitoring allows the identifying of underachievement and triggers effective interventions at the departmental and then whole school level. As a result, only a minority of students fail to achieve their target grades in Religious Education. The feedback students receive is targeted and relevant and allows students to make improvements to their own learning as part of a structured feedback loop.

The department has developed a curriculum that is relevant to the needs of students of all ages and abilities. The schemes of work are designed to encourage creativity in lesson planning and delivery; this was evident in the lessons observed. The department's outstanding performance with students with special educational needs is a reflection of the whole school's commitment to the educationally "poor". The work of the special educational needs department and, in particular, the expertise of learning support assistants in the classroom, are a concrete expression of the school's commitment to gospel values. Students noted that in recent years the opportunities to participate in extra-curricular Religious Education activities has increased and has had a dramatic impact upon their enjoyment and understanding of the Religious Education curriculum. This reflects a general improvement in the breadth of experiences that the Religious Education curriculum now affords. The department now meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in its Religious Education provision. The low uptake and retention of students studying Religious Education at Key Stage 5 is the only area of concern. This has clearly improved for each of the last three years as a result of recruitment drives and if the outcomes at Key Stage 5, especially with the most able, continue to improve then provision would be close to outstanding.

The quality of collective worship is outstanding with all members of staff contributing to the school as a worshipping community. Celebrations of major liturgical events are clearly embedded in the school calendar; students value such celebrations and view them as outward signs of the distinctiveness of their school. Despite a major building programme, with many teaching rooms out of operation, the school Chapel remains a key area within the school and is used regularly for acts of worship. It is a significant testament to the commitment to worship that a Chapel will take a key position in the new school building.

# LEADERS AND MANAGERS

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

1

Leaders and managers promote the Catholic life of the school through their example and personal witness. Furthering the Catholic life of the school is central to the work of the headteacher and this informs his vision and commitment. The school's mission statement has been developed in full consultation with staff and governors and therefore is integral to the life of the school community. The headteacher and senior leaders monitor all aspects of the Catholic life of the school and promote a commitment to the faith and nurture a community where all are valued and treated with dignity and respect.

The RE department is well led in its use of assessment, tracking and intervention and in its development of an engaging and relevant curriculum. Students are included in the evaluation of their learning and their views are taken into account in the planning of priorities for improvement. Monitoring of teaching and learning in the department is thorough and has driven up standards so that the majority of teaching is good or better. This has contributed to the department's improving outcomes. The current structure of the department is still relatively new and some work needs to be done to ensure that the vision for its future improvement is a shared one that recognises the distinctive strengths of each of its members. The department's own self-evaluation shows a thorough understanding of the relevant data and the improvement plan is realistic and specific in its priorities. The identified priorities are confirmed by this report.

Active members of the governing body are involved in the daily life of the school and they work to ensure that all statutory responsibilities are met. Governors are well informed in relation to the strategic development for the school. Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school are regular items on governing body and governor committee meetings. It is significant that there is no involvement of priests of the Deanery in either the daily life of the school or in respect of the governing body. Governors are committed to furthering the Catholic dimension of the school but would benefit from priestly involvement in this task.

Leaders at all levels are committed to partnership working. This is reflected in the strong links that the school has with wide and diverse groups and organisations. Partnerships at all levels are developed to widen the experiences and opportunities for students. Students engage with many groups allowing them to understand and value their place in the community. Partnership working provides a wealth of opportunities for students to develop their talents and skills. As a member of the Hexham and Newcastle Catholic Partnership (South) the school is involved in numerous joint activities that provide students and staff with a wealth of experiences involving a wide network of Catholic schools.

Provision for community cohesion is outstanding. Given the nature of the intake, the leadership team and staff are committed to providing students with a breadth of experiences to enhance their understanding of the diversity of society locally, nationally and globally. In this respect students are helped to understand and reflect on the impact of their contribution to society as well as recognising that they have a responsibility to promote such virtues as understanding, tolerance and respect. A wide and comprehensive programme of links and activities, some international and some with marginalised groups in society, gives students a breadth of experience and a depth of understanding that is to be commended by all.

## 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>2</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>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress</li> </ul>	<b>2</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' attainment in Religious Education</li> </ul>	<b>2</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>1</b>
<b>How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education</b>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education</li> </ul>	<b>2</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>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the quality of Collective worship provided by the school</li> </ul>	<b>1</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>2</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>1</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>