



**Section 48
Inspection Report**

**St Cuthbert's Catholic High School
Newcastle upon Tyne**

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

School:	St Cuthbert's Catholic High School
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School URN:	108535
Headteacher:	Mr J Gerard Murphy
Chair of Governors:	Dr Michael-Joseph Mc-Dade
Lead Inspector:	Maura Regan
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Date of Inspection:	5 & 6 December 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 Cuthbert's Catholic High School is a larger-than-average boys' secondary school located in the west end of Newcastle upon Tyne. Pupils attending the school come predominantly from the local area and although the very large majority are of White British heritage, a number of different minority-ethnic groups are also represented. There are over 1100 pupils on roll with approximately 200 in the Sixth Form; the school serves 13 local Catholic parishes. Around one-fifth of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. There is a smaller proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities than is found nationally, although broadly average numbers of students have a statement of special educational needs. The school has held specialist status for science since 2003 and was awarded a second specialism of modern foreign languages in 2007. It also holds Healthy School status and is a Leading Edge school. The pupils appreciate their school particularly for the sense of community and the good relationships that they experience. Responses from parents and carers to regular questionnaires demonstrate high levels of support for the school.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll: 1113

Planned Admission Number of Pupils: 190

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 73.6%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 11%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 13.1%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 2.3%

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 25.5%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 14.7%

Staffing

Full time teachers: 73

Part time teachers: 12

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 68.2%

RE Department Staffing:

Number of full time RE teachers: 5

Number of part time RE teachers: 1

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%

6th Form: 5%

Parishes served by the school:

English Martyrs, Fenham

St Michael's, Elswick

St Bede's, Denton Burn

St Charles', Gosforth

St Cuthbert's, Kenton

St Cuthbert's, Walbottle

St John Vianney, West Denton

St Robert of Newminster, Fenham

Sacred Heart, Wideopen

Cathedral Church of St Mary, Newcastle

St Mark's, Westerhope

St Joseph's, Benwell

St George's, Bell's Close

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic education

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

MAIN FINDINGS

St Cuthbert's is an outstanding Catholic school. Leadership is strong providing true witness and positive Christian role models for all. The Headteacher and Senior Leaders are passionate about the school, its pupils and staff. An intricate and highly developed web of relationships across the school community ensures that pupils have a wealth of experience in all aspects of school life and so fulfilling the school's mission of 'Learning to live life to the full'. There is a calm and welcoming atmosphere throughout the school with all boys being valued as individuals and for what they are able to contribute to the community. Pupils are challenged to develop a personal value system from a Christian or other religious perspective depending on their own religious beliefs but always guided by such principles as 'Justice through stewardship' and the 'dignity of difference'.

Outcomes for pupils are outstanding; in particular the progress made by pupils, of all abilities, in their GCSE in Religious Education (RE) is outstanding. Outcomes at Key Stage 3 are similarly high and prepare pupils for their GCSE study extremely well. Outcomes at Sixth Form are consistently good and A Level RE has had a 100% pass rate for a number of years. St Cuthbert's has a rich Catholic heritage and this permeates through the daily life of staff and pupils; pupils clearly benefit from this richness and are given many opportunities to actively contribute to the Catholic life of the school.

Provision for Religious Education is outstanding. Lessons are engaging, extremely well planned and focused on pupil progress. The RE department is extremely well led and the Head of Department is keen to embrace new learning and teaching strategies that enthuse and engage pupils. Across the RE department assessment, monitoring, advice and guidance are all used to excellent effect and ensure all pupils achieve to the very best of their ability. Provision for collective worship is outstanding. Pupils experience a rich diversity of prayer and liturgical life; both pupils and staff are comfortable at leading collective worship in a variety of settings.

Leadership and Management is outstanding. The Headteacher plays a pivotal role in the development of the school as a worshipping, Christian community. He is supported in this mission by staff, governors and local clergy. The boys of St. Cuthbert's are well served by the dedication of the Headteacher and as a result pupils and staff feel valued and respected by the leadership and governors. Levels of

communication are outstanding and robust support structures ensure that all members of the community make a positive contribution to the life of the school. The school is characterised by prominent displays of pupils' work and by Christian signs and symbols which collectively establish an air of celebration and witness which resonates throughout the school.

- What the school needs to do to improve further:
 - explore the possibility of increasing access to IT for the RE department;
 - provide Continuous Professional Development opportunities in relation to Learning and Teaching to encourage greater risk taking and increase the diversity of pupil response;
 - provide an effective induction programme for the recently appointed chaplain.

PUPILS

1

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

Attainment and achievement within Religious Education is outstanding. GCSE results over the last 3 years have shown a strong rising trend and the performance of current pupils indicates that this rise will continue. The current Year 11, based on their interim modular results, are expected to reach 78% A*-C and 35% A*-A. These results are significantly higher than national averages for attainment in Religious Education. Progress and achievement at Key Stage 4 are similarly high; a large majority of pupils make the expected progress, or exceed it, using data based on prior attainment. The school sets challenging targets for all and the pupils show resilience in meeting these targets. RE lessons are characterised by academic rigour alongside activities that engage and enthuse pupils in their learning; lessons are very clearly focused and allow all pupils to make good progress. Pupils speak very highly of their RE teachers and they respond very positively to the guidance and direction given in class. Pupils with particular learning needs (Special Educational Needs, Gifted and Talented, and English as an Additional Language) as well as children in receipt of Free School Meals also make outstanding progress in their GCSEs. The numbers of pupils opting to take AS and A Level RE are very healthy and the department welcomes all Sixth Form pupils who wish to take RE at this level. Attainment at AS Level and A Level is very good and for a number of years the department has achieved a 100% pass rate at A Level. A large majority of pupils at A Level make progress beyond their expected grade. Sixth Form lessons are characterised by the development of higher-order thinking skills, challenging debate and a focus on achieving high standards.

Pupils are outstanding in their contribution to the Catholic life of the school. St Cuthbert's is a caring and compassionate community that makes a positive contribution on a local, national and international level. Pupils are proud of the school's rich heritage and are comfortable talking about their faith and the distinctive Catholic nature of St Cuthbert's. Pupils are given opportunities to demonstrate leadership skills in transition days, sports activities and open evenings. They are also heavily involved in a range of charitable activities, raising money and awareness in a number of different areas. All staff at St Cuthbert's are encouraged to contribute to the Catholic life of the school and in so doing provide many opportunities for moral, spiritual and personal development, for example: the Language department has developed strong links with the Franciscan community in Rezzato; the film club has produced *'Riches from the Earth'* which reflects on issues of stewardship and Sixth Form pupils have run a local soup kitchen.

Pupil participation in collective worship is outstanding. All pupils value the part that collective worship plays in the life of the school and respect the religious beliefs of all members of the school community.

Time is given over to personal reflection as well as more formal acts of worship. The boys have a mature approach to worship and to their own spiritual formation. The value that the school places on collective worship and the central position of the chapel in the school together with the outstanding work carried out by the deputy head to engage the clergy in the day to day life of the school ensures that St. Cuthbert's is a vibrant worshipping community.

PROVISION

1

How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education

Learning and progress within Religious Education is outstanding. The Head of RE leads a department of well-qualified, committed, Catholic RE teachers and together they provide a highly effective curriculum meeting the needs of the pupils. Lessons are characterised by very strong relationships between pupils as well as between staff and pupils; respect and consideration are evident within all lessons and this enables good quality learning to take place. Lessons are always focused on pupil learning. A variety of teaching strategies are used to engage and enthuse all pupils and where these are combined with pace and questioning, learning is outstanding. Lessons, and sequences of lessons, are consistently well-planned and the department work together very effectively as a team, each drawing on the strengths of each other.

Pupils receive outstanding guidance within Religious Education. Pupils receive regular verbal and written feedback and this enables them to make excellent progress in their work. The department has an effective marking policy (based on 'what went well' and 'even better if') and the consistent application of this policy has a marked effect on pupils' understanding of how to improve their work. Pupils are adept at using self and peer assessment and show consideration when working with their peers. Regular assessment opportunities are used by teachers to identify any interventions that are necessary to support pupils in their learning. Pupils with specific educational needs are very well catered for with precise targets that support learning. As a consequence the vast majority of pupils make very good progress when judged against their target grades.

Pupils speak very highly of their religious education; they enjoy their work, listen with respect to each other and are keen to explore new topics. Pupils are given many opportunities within Religious Education to reflect upon various ethical, social and cultural issues and pupils show a high level of ethical and spiritual literacy. The syllabus at Key Stage 3 is question-led and this has allowed the department to develop a higher-order thinking skills approach to lessons. At Key Stage 4 pupils enjoy the 2 GCSE papers and a wide variety of teaching strategies are used to make the curriculum accessible and enjoyable for pupils. In Sixth Form pupils are offered a variety of pathways through General RE including Ethics, Philosophy and New Testament; this is a new model for General RE in St Cuthbert's that draws on the respective strengths of the department and seeks to further engage and motivate pupils in the Sixth Form. The RE curriculum time meets the Bishops' Conference requirements across all 3 key stages.

The quality of collective worship in the school is outstanding. All pupils experience an extensive and diverse programme. The combination of year group assemblies and form assemblies provide opportunities for a wide range of activities, celebration and reflection. All pupils have the opportunity to plan, prepare and deliver acts of collective worship. Community cohesion is strengthened as pupils of all religious

backgrounds are provided with opportunities to share their own practices and beliefs. All staff take an active role in collective worship and in so doing provide outstanding role models for the boys.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

1

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

Leadership and management is outstanding. The Headteacher is passionate in promoting the Catholic life of the school and ensuring outstanding outcomes for all pupils. The senior leadership team effectively support him in his work and there is a tangible air of humility characteristic of servant leadership. Senior leaders lead by example and provide positive role models to pupils and staff. Care guidance and support is outstanding with all pupils feeling valued and able to express themselves within a secure and affirming environment. All leaders give priority to developing the Catholic life of the school and regularly evaluate its impact on the personal development of pupils. In this way St Cuthbert's is a vibrant religious community characterised by service.

The monitoring and evaluating of RE provision is outstanding. The Curriculum Leader is a member of the Senior Leadership team and this gives an endorsement to the centrality of RE in the curriculum. The Head of RE leads by example and is a role model to both staff and students. The RE development plan reflects whole school priorities and is focused on high standards of teaching and learning; assessment, tracking and intervention are well developed and consequently the needs of all pupils are catered for. Alongside the academic development of each pupil the Head of RE prioritises the moral, spiritual and personal development of each child. Pupil feedback is gathered and used to inform departmental planning; more recently the department has embraced the Diocesan vision for Key Stage 3 with a focus on engaging pupils through question-led lessons. School and departmental systems for monitoring teaching and learning and evaluating the curriculum are well-focused and have resulted in an effective and enthusiastic department.

Governors are actively involved in the Catholic life of the school and provide strategic direction in all aspects of Governors' responsibilities. There are strong Governor links with departments and they know the school very well. This involvement together with the strong links with the local parishes means that the school is well supported. Governors provide effective challenge and support to the school in aspects of school development and together with the Headteacher provide strong strategic leadership.

Partnership is at the heart of school life; strong links with both feeder primaries and local secondary Catholic schools ensures a rich and diverse transition programme common to all. Close links with their sister girls' school provides a wealth of curriculum and staffing opportunities. There is a shared Post-16 Enrichment programme and a wealth of other opportunities for students to develop spiritually, morally and culturally.

Partnerships with a wide range of external agencies provide pupils with the opportunity to enjoy rewarding experiences beyond the classroom. Educational visits in the UK and abroad, charitable works, care in the community and an extensive

retreat programme collectively contribute to the school being outstanding in its promoting of the Catholic life of the school.

The promotion of and opportunities to develop community cohesion are outstanding. The 8% of pupils from other world religions, especially Muslims, provides a diverse community that serves to enhance the boys' understanding and tolerance of all who make up the St Cuthbert's community. The Headteacher and senior staff are passionate about the school and see it as central to their mission to lead a school where all are valued and where the vulnerable are given the support and encouragement to flourish in a positive caring environment.

The boys are encouraged to take an active part in all aspects of school life and care guidance and support is outstanding. The reduction in the number of exclusions year on year is testament to the increasingly inclusive nature of the school and the high quality of care that is given. Tolerance, respect and compassion are key principles within the community.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

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

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