



St Bede's RC Primary School

Kingsway, Darlington, Co Durham, DL1 3ES

School Unique Reference Number: **138253**

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| Inspection dates: | 23 – 24 June 2015 |
| Lead inspector: | Liz O'Hehir |

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| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | This inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
| Catholic Life: | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Collective Worship: | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Religious Education: | | Good | 2 |

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Bede's RC Primary School is a good Catholic school because:

- Catholic Life is outstanding. Governors, leaders and staff have high expectations and a shared vision with regard to the Catholic mission and ethos of the school.
- The well-being and personal development of each child is at the heart of this inclusive community.
- The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding because it is central to the life of the school. Staff and pupils, led by the acting headteacher and school chaplain, plan and lead high quality acts of worship where all pupils act with deep reverence and respect.
- Religious Education is good. Good teaching and subject knowledge ensure most pupils make good progress over time. Pupils enjoy their learning and concentrate very well.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Bede's was granted academy status on 1 August 2012. It is a larger than average primary school serving the parishes of St Thomas, St Anne and St William.
- Until September 2014, the school was single form entry. The planned admission number has been increased to 45 pupils to accommodate the demand for Catholic school places. Currently, there are 278 pupils on roll, 88% of whom are baptised Catholic. It also has a class for nursery pupils who attend on a part-time basis.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average and the vast majority of pupils remain in St Bede's throughout their primary schooling.
- The school has been through a period of instability due to a number of staff changes. The governing body appointed an acting headteacher and deputy headteacher with effect from September 2014. A new headteacher is due to take up post in September 2015.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Develop leadership of Religious Education by:
 - Ensuring rigorous and robust monitoring and evaluation systems are in place so that timely intervention brings about the highest possible outcomes for all classes and groups of pupils.
- Develop the effectiveness of the learning process in Religious Education by:
 - Building on the good practice that exists to ensure marking and feedback consistently provides pupils with information on how to improve their work and gives them time to respond.
 - Ensure lesson planning is consistently linked to the current assessment of pupils' prior learning and is differentiated so that it builds and extends learning for all pupils.
- Develop Leadership capacity of Collective Worship by:
 - Attendance of the school chaplain at Diocesan termly meetings to share good practice.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The mission statement was re-drafted at the beginning of the academic year ensuring the well-being and personal development of each pupil is at the heart of the school. It is enthusiastically embraced by all and lived out on a daily basis. Pupils know it by heart and have developed their own actions and movements which they perform, with obvious belief and delight, when reciting it.
- Pupils make a contribution to the Catholic Life of the school from an early age. This is evidenced in pupils' responses in forums, prayer books and photographs of charitable work.
- All pupils have a deep sense of belonging, are extremely proud of their school and know how that should be expressed whenever they represent the school in the community. They are very aware of the needs of others both locally and globally, responding passionately to issues of social injustice. A recent visit to the local foodbank prompted pupils to develop a whole school assembly and subsequent food collections that are distributed to the needy.
- Behaviour is exemplary. Policies and practice are rooted in gospel values. Pupils talk about the need to be honest, taking responsibility and being forgiving. Older pupils willingly take on lead roles in the school community, as trained peer mentors, buddies, Mini Vinnies and school councillors. They are excellent role models and have the total respect and admiration of younger pupils.
- Relationships between parents, pupils and staff, and among pupils, are strong. Pastoral care is outstanding and greatly appreciated by parents and pupils. As a result, all pupils are happy, confident and secure in their own stage of spiritual growth.
- All pupils are very respectful and show reverence for the rites and traditions of their faith. They are proud of their religious identity and eagerly take part in school, community and diocesan celebrations and activities.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The new school mission statement is embedded across the curriculum and throughout school life. It inspires pupils to 'be the best they can'. All staff and governors are passionate about its implementation and there is a palpable sense of warmth and belonging in this joyful school.
- Excellent relationships exist between all staff, pupils, parents and governors in this 'family' community. All are welcomed. Parents commented on the opportunities they have to pray

and celebrate faith with their children for example through prayer bags, attendance at assemblies, celebrations, liturgies, masses.

- The vibrant displays, commissioned artwork and prayerful spaces contribute to a learning environment that reflects the school's mission and celebrates its Catholic character.
- Pastoral care for pupils and staff is outstanding. Clear policies and structures are in place to ensure the highest level of care for all. Parents describe the school as a very nurturing environment reporting, 'It's like dropping your child off every morning with family'. Rainbows and Sunbeams programmes very effectively support the needs of the most vulnerable. The exceptional work of key staff is greatly appreciated by parents and pupils, expressed in their evaluations and thank you letters and cards.
- Behaviour is outstanding and promoted through clear and consistent communication of expectations. Policies are deeply rooted in Gospel values encouraging everyone to be responsible for an atmosphere of justice and reconciliation.
- Personal social and health education (PSHE) is delivered very effectively through class discussions using 'Statements to Live By' introduced each week at whole school Collective Worship. The relationship and sex education (RSE) is delivered throughout the school at age appropriate levels using 'A Journey in Love'.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is good.

- Leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. They have a very clear understanding of the vision of Catholic education and are highly respected and a source of inspiration for the school community.
- Staff and pupils' understanding of the school's mission is outstanding, sharing its purpose and are actively involved in supporting it.
- The chair of governors, parish priests and key governors make a significant contribution to the Catholic Life of the school. They are passionate about the school's mission and consistently communicate high expectations, providing appropriate challenge and support during this period of transitional leadership. They play a key role in strategic decision-making and in planning the journey on which the school is travelling.
- Catholic Life is a feature of the school development plan and school self-evaluation. Leaders and managers know their school well and conduct a range of monitoring activities relating to the provision and outcomes but monitoring is not rigorous enough and is not systematically planned.
- The school works well with very supportive parents and carers to achieve positive benefits for pupils.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship is outstanding.

- St Bede's is a very prayerful community where pupils and staff engage in a variety of prayer, liturgy and reflections regularly throughout the day and the week. Acts of worship engage all pupils. It is a central part of their experience of school and inspires them to reflect and respond with reverence and joy.
- From the youngest nursery child and across all classes, pupils are focussed during prayer and worship. They know how to contribute and respond appropriately because of skillful modelling by their leaders.
- Pupils confidently plan and lead Collective Worship at age appropriate levels. Resources are used creatively and imaginatively to fit with their chosen theme. Older pupils plan and lead worship independently using scripture, religious artefacts, music and silence to create an atmosphere conducive to prayer. Pupils' prayers, thoughts and feelings are a consistent feature of class displays, class prayer and reflection books.
- Almost all pupils have an understanding of the liturgical year and express their enjoyment of the various seasons and feasts that they celebrate with staff. The feast of their school patron saint is joyfully celebrated with the whole community.
- Pupils have a deep sense of social justice. They have a good understanding of other faiths and are very respectful of others.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Worship and prayer is central to the life of the school and valued by all. Prayer is a natural part of the daily experience of all pupils and staff. Staff are skilled at guiding pupils so that they can have a deeper experience of prayer and worship.
- Collective Worship is given a very high priority in St Bede's. Themes chosen are based on 'Statements to Live By', the liturgical year and the spiritual aspirations of pupils.
- Parent/carers and governors respond very positively to the invitation to share in prayer opportunities and cherish the high quality experience that so inspires their children.
- The school chaplain has a high profile in the school. He ensures that all teachers are highly skilled at helping pupils to plan and lead Collective Worship. Staff have a thorough understanding of its purpose and forms it can take. Pupils are becoming increasingly creative in their input. For example, in preparation for the year four act of Collective Worship observed during the inspection, pupils had asked the chaplain to bring in some holy oil so that they could anoint each other as part of the 'Going Forth' element of their

plan.

- Leaders have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical heritage, its rites and seasons and are passionate that pupils have high quality experiences. A dedicated budget is well managed to ensure an increasing range of good quality resources is available for staff and pupils to use in their liturgies.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- The acting headteacher and the school chaplain, who is highly visible as leader of Collective Worship, provide excellent role models for staff and pupils. They ensure that their expert knowledge of how to plan and deliver worship is shared with staff.
- As role models and leaders of worship, their dedication and commitment is a source of inspiration for staff, pupils and parents and is instrumental in the drive to provide high quality Collective Worship across the school that meets the needs of all pupils. For example, in a whole school assembly, based on the statement, 'I understand what trust means', light-hearted role-play between two pupils demonstrated, in a way that was accessible to even the youngest child, how much harder it is to trust someone we cannot see.
- Leaders ensure that all staff receive formation in the development of spiritual and liturgical understanding.
- Collective Worship is regularly monitored and reviewed as part of self-evaluation by leaders and governors. They seek the views of pupils, parents and staff which are overwhelmingly positive. As yet, there is no formal system for collecting parents' feedback however, during the inspection, parents described the high level of parental participation and the 'real celebration of faith' they experience.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is good.

- Lesson observations and pupil discussions evidence the high degree of pupils' enjoyment and commitment to their learning in Religious Education. They view it as one of their most important and favourite lessons.
- Pupils concentrate very well and are rarely off task. They report that, 'it's fun but challenges us to think' and that, 'teachers help us to relate bible stories to everyday current life'.
- Most groups of pupils are making progress in Religious Education within lessons and over time. They have an understanding of how well they have done. Older pupils understand their targets and how to improve their work because 'teachers discuss our work with us'.
- Pupils apply a range of skills well, developing both their knowledge and understanding and the ability to reflect on meaning. Many pupils are very articulate and reflective in their responses, engaging with religious ideas and integrating them into their daily lives.
- Standards of attainment for the large majority of pupil groups and classes are in line with Diocesan averages and some are above.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good.

- The quality of teaching is good or better, enthusing pupils and ensuring good progress over sequences of lessons and over time. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and often outstanding.
- Teachers have high expectations and are enthusiastic about Religious Education and this is clearly communicated to pupils. As a result, pupils concentrate well and the majority take great pride in their work.
- Lessons are creatively planned and resourced to promote good learning across age ranges and are based on the Diocesan programme, 'Come and See'.
- Teachers manage time well within lessons and use questioning skilfully to maximise learning. Teachers differentiate tasks to meet the variety of pupil needs, taking into account pupils' prior learning. Support staff are deployed very well. They are involved from the planning stage, effectively supporting pupils during lessons and contributing to the assessment process.

- Older pupils understand their targets and know how to improve mainly because of the verbal feedback they receive. For younger pupils, planning of quality experiences, teacher evaluations, assessment and feedback consistently ensure the needs of all pupils are met. Across the school, the quality of marking and feedback is not consistent and does not give pupils sufficient direction to lead to improvement. Nevertheless, pupils are often involved in evaluating how well they achieve and this is celebrated.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is good.

- Leaders use a highly sophisticated electronic system to track standards of attainment in Religious Education for all pupils and groups on a termly basis. Therefore, teachers' planning is founded on sound evidence and data and outcomes are good in Religious Education. Strategies to monitor teaching and learning are not rigorous and embedded into practice. This is recognised by governors and leaders and, and for the most part due to the current transitional nature of the leadership.
- Leaders have a good knowledge of the Religious Education curriculum and standards of attainment. They have high expectations and confidence in staff, inspiring them to continually improve their teaching, providing appropriate support and training where needed. As a result, there is a shared common purpose amongst all teaching staff. Religious Education has a prominent profile in the school and makes a very positive contribution to pupils' moral and spiritual development.
- The school has good links with a variety of agencies, the wider community and local schools to provide an enriched curriculum and activities promoting pupils' learning and engagement.
- The curriculum, based on 'Come and See' enables pupils to gain first hand quality experiences of the liturgical life of the Catholic Church. This is supplemented by visits and visitors who share their experience of faith.
- Sacramental preparation is well embedded and in line with Diocesan policy. It is a joyful and shared experience across the three parishes the school serves.
- Religious Education is well resourced, comparing favourably with other core subjects and meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

HOW EFFECTIVE THE SCHOOL IS IN PROVIDING CATHOLIC EDUCATION:**1****CATHOLIC LIFE:****1**

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

1

The quality of provision for 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.

2

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**1**

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

1

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**2**

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

2

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

2

How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

2

SCHOOL DETAILS

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| School name | St Bede's RC Primary School |
| Unique reference number | 138253 |
| Local authority | Darlington |
| This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Séamus Cunningham the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese under canon 806 of Canon Law. For voluntary aided schools it also fulfils the responsibility the Governing Body has to inspect the school under s48 of the Education Act 2005. | |
| Chair of governors | George Firbank |
| Acting head teacher | Michael Tiplady |
| Date of previous school inspection | May 2010 |
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