

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

School: St Bede's RC Primary School
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School URN: 114284
Headteacher: Mrs Clare Taylor
Chair of Governors: Mr George Firbank
Inspector: Miss Maria Elliott
Date of Inspection: 4 and 5 May 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 Bede's is a one form entry average size primary school with a nursery class. The school is situated in the town of Darlington and serves the parishes of St Anne and St Thomas Aquinas. The vast majority of the pupils in school are baptised Catholics and come from white UK heritage backgrounds. All pupils transfer to Carmel RC College, Darlington. The number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The school is very popular within the local community. Parents view the school highly and see it as a 'family that gives the children a sense of community and a wider outlook on life'.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll: 237

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 90%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 5%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 2%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 3%

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 8%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 22%

Staffing

Number of full time teachers: 8

Number of part time teachers: 2

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 89%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 63%

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 Anne, Darlington

St Thomas Aquinas, Darlington

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic education

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

MAIN FINDINGS

St Bede's is a good Catholic school with many outstanding features. The mission and ethos of Catholic education not only underpins all that the school does but is lived out daily by staff and pupils alike. Strong relationships are a strength of the school and foster the development of a community in which inclusion is given a high priority. Prayer is at the heart of the school and the pupils, even from the youngest, are supported and enabled to develop a deep and personal relationship with their God. All areas for improvement from the last inspection have been addressed and developments are ongoing. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good. Senior leaders and governors have been very proactive in ensuring that there has been a systematic process in place to ensure a smooth transition of headship. Pupils are very well cared for and from a very early age, learn about the importance of treating each other with respect and have a good understanding of right and wrong. The school is held in high regard by the pupils, parents and the local community and has an important place in the life of the parish.

Outcomes for pupils are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They engage well in lessons and generally have positive attitudes to learning. From average starting points, all pupils make good, and in some instances, outstanding progress in Religious Education and attain standards that are above average and achieve well. They benefit greatly from the range of opportunities offered to them and make a significant contribution to the Catholic life of the school which has a profound impact on their lives. Pupils respond with respect and reverence to the collective worship opportunities offered. The level of pupil participation in the liturgical life of the school is good and this increases as they move through the school. Pupils are supported greatly in their understanding of the different forms of prayer, but most significantly in their development of a personal prayer life. The promotion of spiritual and moral development is good.

The school provides a good Catholic education. Religious Education is given high priority and in recent years the school has seen a rapid improvement in both progress and standards. Overall, the quality of teaching is good, but ranges from outstanding to satisfactory across the school. This leads to purposeful learning and generally motivated, interested and engaged pupils. Assessment and academic guidance is satisfactory. Although systems are in place giving a clear picture of how well pupils are achieving and progressing, as yet, the information has not been transferred to classroom practice and pupils have limited knowledge of how to improve. Teacher assessment is not always accurate and this is an area for continuous development. The Religious Education curriculum provided meets pupils' needs well and some good adaptations are made to tailor the curriculum to meet specific needs. The quality of collective worship is good. Staff are good role models for pupils and offer a variety of opportunities for prayer and worship.

The promotion of the Catholic life of the school by leaders and managers is good with outstanding features. As a result of the headteacher's passion to continually promote and develop the Catholic life of the school, the pupils are able to articulate the distinctive mission of the school, share its purpose and be actively involved in shaping it. Leaders and managers have worked very well together in leading a committed staff with a common vision to ensure the best for each pupil. There is a clear sense of direction regarding curriculum Religious Education and all are committed to raising standards. Developing and emerging systems are in place to drive school improvement forward. The professional development of all staff has been given high priority in order to ensure that they have a developing understanding of how to raise attainment for all pupils, improve progress and develop the Catholic life of the school. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities satisfactorily. They are kept well informed and have a developing overview of the strengths and areas of development within school. The development of partnerships in order to promote Catholic learning and well being is outstanding. The outstanding promotion of community cohesion enables pupils to have a well developed awareness of difference and positive attitudes of tolerance and respect.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- ensure pupils are enabled to plan, prepare and lead worship themselves.
- develop the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education by:
 - ensuring assessment, marking and target setting are an integral part of the planned learning process.
 - ensuring pupils are involved in the assessment process so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
 - develop the accuracy of teacher assessment so that it directly relates to levels of attainment in Religious Education.

PUPILS

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

2

Pupils are keen to do well in Religious Education and most speak with varying degrees of enthusiasm and enjoyment about their lessons. They concentrate very well in lessons and are rarely off task. They work effectively when provided with appropriate tasks but lack the guidance, knowledge and confidence to improve their work. Pupils in upper Key Stage 2 stated emphatically that they would like their lessons to be more interesting and challenging. Current data shows that standards are above average with a very large majority of pupils achieving level 4 by the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils enter St Bede's with average starting points and make good progress quickly throughout the Foundation Stage. This progress accelerates further throughout Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 resulting in outstanding progress over the last 3 years. Achievement is above average throughout the school for all groups of learners. Pupils are becoming progressively more religiously literate and their knowledge, skills and understanding are developing well.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school and benefit greatly from it. Pupils lead and take responsibility for shaping activities with a religious character, for example, during Lent the Year 6 pupils chose a different fundraising event for each Friday to support St Cuthbert's Care 5p bus appeal. They have a deep rooted sense of social justice and a belief that they can make a difference in the world. They take full advantage of the many opportunities offered to them and can articulate how the school is helping them to become better people. They are very reflective and enquiring and understand that religious belief and spiritual values are important to many people. They are interested in the religious life of others and are extremely comfortable and very articulate when expressing their own beliefs. They understand the importance of key celebrations in school and in the parish community throughout the liturgical year. The pupils benefit greatly from the links with the parish Sisters who support the chaplaincy role within the school. Pupils are considerate to others and respond to the needs of people beyond the school. They have a very strong sense of who they are and use their pupil voice wisely, confidently and sensibly. They show a very well developed awareness of compassion, forgiveness and justice and display mature and positive attitudes to school life.

Pupils' response to and participation in collective worship is good. Pupils have a strong sense of what worship is about and are at ease when praying with their school community. From an early age, pupils in the Foundation Stage are able to sit quietly and using a holding cross, each in turn say their own spontaneous prayer of thanks. Pupils understand there are different types of prayer, formal and informal, and know some traditional prayers appropriate to their age. They join in community prayers well, reflect silently, sing joyfully and understand that song is a form of prayer. They have a good understanding of the religious feasts and seasons as well as a very well developed and sophisticated understanding of scripture by the time they leave St Bede's. They act with reverence and respect in worship and are keen to actively participate. However, they have little understanding as to what constitutes a good liturgy and how to plan and lead one. Collective worship has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils.

PROVISION

How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education

2

The majority of teaching and learning is good and in some cases outstanding, however there are inconsistencies across classes. In the best lessons, learning outcomes are clearly signposted in planning and 'I Can Statements' are used to focus assessment which is an integral part of the planned learning journey. Nearly all teaching is effective in ensuring that pupils are engaged, stimulated and interested in their learning resulting in good and often outstanding progress. The majority of teachers have good subject knowledge which lends confidence to their teaching styles. A good range of resources are used in imaginative and thought provoking ways. Excellent questioning techniques encourage the skills and confidence needed for independent learning. Not all teachers ensure they plan for a level of challenge that will enable all pupils to reach their full potential. Pupils with additional needs are well supported and have work tailored to their needs.

Assessment and academic guidance are satisfactory. Recently the school has implemented a robust assessment system so they have detailed information on pupils' achievement. Staff training has been used effectively to develop teachers' knowledge and understanding of assessment procedures. This has resulted in increased staff confidence, although there is still some work to be done in securing accuracy in the higher levels of attainment. At present, assessment procedures are not always used consistently to inform learning, teaching and future planning. Academic guidance for the pupils is emerging. Generally the majority of teachers' marking is focused mainly on what pupils can do and teacher feedback does not always give pupils enough guidance on how to improve their work. Overall, pupils are not involved in self assessment activities resulting in them having limited knowledge about their progress in Religious Education.

The Religious Education curriculum is good and is well adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. It fulfils the requirements of the Bishops' Conference well. The whole school enquiry based curriculum is beginning to filter through to Religious Education and the questions posed by teachers are leading to learning that is developing deep thinkers, equipping them very well for the next stage of their life. The curriculum is enriched by most teachers, with role-play, drama, ICT, art and music being used to good effect. Links with other schools and organisations also impact positively on the Religious Education curriculum. Pupils are provided with a good range of opportunities to enrich their spiritual and moral development.

The quality of collective worship provided by the school is good and given a high profile. Prayer is at the heart of the life of the school and the whole school community. This is reflected in the way pupils are enabled, from an early age, to develop a personal relationship with Jesus and God through prayer, Adults and pupils are comfortable praying together. Staff are skilled in leading class liturgies and actively encourage pupils to lead prayers and to write prayers. The school is well resourced with each class having their own 'Liturgy Box'. Acts of worship are fully inclusive, reflective and well planned by staff, enabling pupils to take an active part. However, there are limited opportunities offered to the pupils to develop an awareness of the structure of worship in order to prepare, plan and lead their own liturgies. At present the range of opportunities for parents and parishioners to attend class and whole school worship is limited but the school is well aware of this and has plans in place to further develop this element of school collective worship.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

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

2

The effectiveness of leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The school's leadership, in particular, the headteacher are dedicated to the Church's mission of education. The deep commitment, energy and drive of the headteacher is a source of inspiration for staff and parents alike. There is unequivocal and explicit evidence that the Catholic mission of the school is a priority along with the spiritual and moral development of pupils. School monthly newsletters to parents give them regular information as to the developments in the Catholic life of the school. Focused staff training and clear staff induction have developed awareness, understanding and commitment to the school's strong Catholic ethos. Staff regard the school's leadership as a role model for all. Consequently pupils are able to articulate the distinctive mission of the school extremely well. They very clearly state that they 'follow Jesus' way and act the way he showed us', share its purpose, and are actively involved in shaping it.

Leaders and managers monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education is good. Due to long term absence there have been changes in the leadership of curriculum Religious Education during this academic year. As a new headteacher will be in post from September 2010, the current headteacher, along with the deputy head, are taking joint responsibility for subject co-ordination in order to facilitate the transition period in senior leadership. Therefore, the systems in place for the monitoring and evaluation of the provision for Religious Education are still in the early stages. However, the use of data to bring about improvement in provision and in pupils' outcomes has developed at a rapid pace. Staff training has been focused on key areas of development identified by senior leadership. This has enabled staff to be well informed, building staff confidence and competence. The high expectation the school is driving forward is communicated through this training. Clear steps for ongoing improvement are identified by the school through the school's own self evaluation process.

Governors discharge their statutory and canonical duties. Through regular meetings, visits to school and information from the headteacher they have an overview of the strengths and areas for development as well as the challenges it faces. They are supportive of the school and the areas for development. They are well informed and have an understanding of matters relating to the school's performance in Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school and the strategies the school has put in place to raise standards further. However, they are not fully involved in the self-evaluation processes within school. Diocesan governor training is undertaken by some governors in order to further develop their role and support the school.

As a result of the headteacher's passion to continually develop the Catholic life of the school, the partnerships developed with others to promote Catholic learning and well being is outstanding. A wide range of partnership activities, for example, St Cuthbert's Care, CAFOD, Tradecraft and links with a school in Kenya make a very good contribution to pupils' well being and to the Catholic life of the school. The headteacher ensures that links are very well established with other Catholic primary schools, the diocese, the Youth Ministry Team, the local parishes and other local organisations. These provide opportunities which enable pupils and staff to enjoy and achieve extremely well. Pupils are able to articulate the impact these

partnerships have on them as individuals. They benefit considerably and develop extremely well in a number of areas which the school alone could not provide.

Leaders and managers' promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. The school is an inclusive community with a clear, shared vision, a strong sense of belonging and a family atmosphere. Leaders work with others beyond the school to ensure that pupils are given opportunities to explore, visit and collaborate with people from different backgrounds. Within the school there is a sense of respect for all, where similarities, differences and diversity are celebrated and valued. Relationships through a variety of projects, especially their collaboration with a school in Kenya, have developed the pupils' friendships which cross cultural, faith, social and economic boundaries. The opportunities offered to the pupils are enabling them to develop as responsible citizens with a clear sense of social justice and global awareness. Acts of collective worship are inclusive and each one's spiritual identity is respected. The Religious Education curriculum promotes attitudes of respect and tolerance for all faiths and those with none.

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	1
• 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	3
• 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	1
• 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	3
• 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