

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



**Section 48 Inspection Report  
St Paul's RC First School  
Cramlington**

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION  
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

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| <b>School:</b>             | St Paul's RCVA First School                 |
| <b>Address:</b>            | Doddington Drive<br>Cramlington<br>NE23 6DF |
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| <b>School URN:</b>         | 122310                                      |
| <b>Headteacher:</b>        | Felicity Penny                              |
| <b>Chair of Governors:</b> | Fr Simon Lerche                             |
| <b>Inspector:</b>          | Carole Snee                                 |
| <b>Date of Inspection:</b> | 4 and 5 October 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 Paul's is a smaller than average sized Roman Catholic First School serving a number of local parishes. It is federated with St Peter's Middle School. St Peter's and St Paul's share one headteacher and governing body, but are two separate schools. The Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 are taught on the St Paul's site. Years 3 and 4 are taught on the St Peter's site. The privately run St Paul's Pre-School group shares the Early Years Foundation Stage accommodation. Nearly all pupils are of white British heritage. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average, as is the number of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or a statement. The Religious Education Co-ordinator is also the Deputy Headteacher of the federation.

### **FACTUAL INFORMATION**

#### **Pupil Catchment:**

Number of pupils on roll: 145

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 82%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 7.6%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 0.7%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 9.7%

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 6.2%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 6.2%

#### **Staffing**

Number of full time teachers: 5.5

Number of part time teachers: 1

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 90%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 26.3%

#### **Percentage of learning time given to Religious Education:**

FS 10%

Yr 1 10%                      Yr 3 10%

Yr 2 10%                      Yr 4 10%

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

St Paul's, Cramlington

St John the Baptist, Annitsford

St Wilfrid's, Blyth

St Aidan's, Ashington

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic education

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

### MAIN FINDINGS

St Paul's is a good Catholic school. It is outstanding in the way it promotes the Catholic faith through the everyday life of the school. The Headteacher has a passionate vision for all connected with St Paul's. The pupils know they are loved by God, and they are all worthy of that love. This vision is articulated through all aspects of school life and is shared by all. It is a deeply reflective community, where pupils often show a maturity beyond their years when talking about their faith.

Outcomes for pupils overall are good. Attitudes to learning are positive, pupils enjoy their learning and behaviour is usually good. Achievement is variable across the Key Stages. Pupils make most progress in Religious Education in the Reception class. There is evidence of recent marked improvement in standards by the end of Year 2. Standards by the end of Year 4 are average for most pupils. Those pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall due to good quality support. Pupils contribute well to the Catholic life of St Paul's, and both parents and pupils benefit extremely well from the strong Catholic ethos which permeates the school. Pupils respond reverently and sensitively to collective worship, and are given opportunities to contribute to it appropriately.

The quality of the collective worship in the school is outstanding and makes a significant contribution to the good Catholic education provided for most of the pupils. Pupils are encouraged to develop their independence in preparing and leading worship themselves. Teaching is variable across the Key Stages. It ranges from satisfactory to good. Assessment systems are in place and the school has made a good start in ensuring they are secure. As yet, however, assessments are not being used consistently to inform challenging planning. Marking is beginning to be used to give useful feedback to pupils, but this is not consistent across the school, particularly for the older pupils. The curriculum is enhanced with a number of high quality resources that serve to engage pupils, capture their enthusiasm and meet their needs and interests.

Leaders and managers' promotion of the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The Headteacher lives out her own strong faith by personal example and is extremely well supported by the expertise and faith models of the co-ordinator and the Chair of Governors. Together, they make an outstanding team. Monitoring and evaluation of the provision for the Catholic life of the school is as yet informal, although good systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the Religious Education have recently been put in place by the highly skilled co-ordinator. They

have yet, however, to make a significant impact on standards. Governors are very supportive and are well informed of the Catholic life of the school. They are beginning to have an equally clear picture of standards across the school in Religious Education. This has significantly increased the strength and expertise of the leadership team. The school also displays further strengths in the outstanding impact of its partnership activities and its positive promotion of community cohesion. The school knows its own strengths and weaknesses very well and its self-evaluation is extremely honest. It knows exactly where it has to improve next. This ensures that the capacity to continue to improve is good.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise standards across the school by:
  - clarifying for all teachers, expectations for both standards and progress within their classes
  - ensuring that teachers' subject knowledge is secure
  - modelling planning to ensure a clear focus on learning and progression both in class and across the school
  - monitoring and evaluating the quality of the teaching and learning on a termly basis, and reporting progress to the Governing Body.

## PUPILS

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

2

Pupils across the school generally enjoy Religious Education lessons, particularly when they involve exciting and interesting activities such as drama and role play, or games like 'Who wants to be a Millionaire?' They generally work well together in groups and pairs, and are becoming increasingly religiously literate, although at varying rates across the school. Attainment is variable across classes, and average overall. At the end of Key Stage 1, recent improvements have meant that the large majority of pupils are achieving average levels of attainment, with a small minority achieving more. By the end of Year 4 the majority of pupils are attaining average standards with a small minority attaining even higher. From a good level of progress in Reception class, where the majority of pupils enter the school with the skills expected of pupil their age, it then dips before accelerating at the end of Key Stage 1. In lower Key Stage 2, progress is satisfactory overall. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the quality of their support. The quality and rate of learning across classes is inconsistent because teaching is variable. There are recent signs of improvement in attainment at both Key Stage 1 and end of Year 4, but these are not yet embedded enough to lift achievement and enjoyment from satisfactory overall.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school and benefit enormously from it. They are extremely proud of their school and are very articulate when talking about their faith and the responsibilities it carries. Relationships within the school are very positive and pupils really value the opportunities they are given. One child said of the provision offered every morning for prayer before school – 'It makes you feel special...gives us a chance to share our worries.' Pupils are very aware of their contribution to the wider community and take responsibility for a variety of activities that support parish life and the community, such as the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and Macmillan Cancer Care.

Pupils' response to collective worship is good. They are at ease when praying with their school community and use periods of reflection reverently and appropriately. They are keen to participate and join in the singing with great enthusiasm. They really appreciate the very high quality resources used to prepare their collective worship. One pupil said 'the slides make you feel happy because they are beautiful pictures, even when you come into the hall sad.' The adults involved are excellent role models for the pupils and support them very well in becoming more skilled in independently preparing their own liturgies. The variety and quality of worship available to the pupils makes a significant contribution to their spiritual and moral development.

## PROVISION

2

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

The quality of teaching across the school is variable and satisfactory overall. In lessons where teaching is good, teachers work hard to provide fun activities which capture pupils' interests and enthusiasm. Their subject knowledge is good, expectations are high and they use assessment of prior learning well in order to ensure that pupils are appropriately challenged. In some lessons, however, activities are mundane worksheets and cut and stick activities that do not challenge the pupils sufficiently to ensure good progress. This impacts on behaviour as pupils become bored and restless. Support staff are generally used well to help less able pupils.

Overall, the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance is satisfactory. The Religious Education co-ordinator has made an excellent start in identifying systems and procedures that will give the school an accurate picture of achievement and progress over time. There are good systems in place to ensure that levelling of pupils' work is rigorously moderated. As yet, however, assessment is not being used systematically to identify acceptable rates of progress and challenge both teachers and pupils to raise standards across the school. There are some good examples of feedback to pupils through effective marking, but again, this is inconsistent throughout the school. Targets for improvement appear in some books but they are not yet used sufficiently to identify clearly pupils' next steps in learning.

The Religious Education curriculum has been considerably enhanced and improved through the provision of high quality resources that offer many more opportunities to engage and enthuse the interests of all pupils. It fulfils the requirements of the Bishops' Conference well. The new resources have been carefully chosen to support and extend teachers' own subject knowledge as well as provide a wider variety of interesting activities that provide a good context for challenging pupils' learning. Staff are beginning to work together to identify appropriate levels of differentiation in order to meet the needs of all of the pupils effectively.

The quality of collective worship provided by the school is outstanding and ensures that the spiritual needs of all pupils are extremely well met. It is a key strength of the school, central to its life and an integral part of every celebration. Prayer opportunities are offered to both staff and pupils throughout the day. The contribution of collective worship to the parents' faith is a significant feature in St Paul's. As one parent said 'It makes me feel good...I go away from here feeling better.' Themes are linked to the Sunday Gospel, as well as the liturgical season of the year and reflect a deep understanding of the Church's mission for all.

## LEADERS AND MANAGERS

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

2

The Headteacher, extremely well supported by the Religious Education co-ordinator, promotes the Catholic life of the school in an outstanding way. Together they are exceptional role models for their faith. A strong Catholic ethos permeates the school and is an accurate reflection of their deep commitment to the Church's mission in education. As a result pupils access a very high quality range of prayer styles and liturgies. The school is exceptional in caring for the most vulnerable among its community. The monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life of the school are still in the early stages of development and as yet they have had little chance to impact on planning for improvements.

Religious Education is well led in the school. As well as providing a strong level of support to her colleagues, the Religious Education co-ordinator has an extremely accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses across the school through her recently developed monitoring systems. As a result, she is clear about what needs to improve. Together with the rest of the school's leaders, she has identified plans to begin using this accurate self-evaluation to forge ahead with improvements. As yet, however, the impact of this improved self-evaluation has not contributed sufficiently towards raising standards.

The governing body discharge their statutory and canonical duties well. They are very well led by a Chair of Governors who has a sound knowledge of the school and challenges it effectively. While currently all governors are not sufficiently knowledgeable about the standards of teaching and learning to effectively challenge the school, they are beginning to be further involved in monitoring and evaluating standards to enable them to do this. The governors are kept well informed about the Catholic life of the school by comprehensive reports from the Headteacher at termly governing body meetings.

Work across three schools, St Paul's, St Peter's and St Benet's has resulted in some exemplary partnership practice, where strengths are shared and challenges faced openly and honestly. Links with the local parishes are very strong, including support for sacramental preparation and parish Eucharistic celebrations. The partnership with the pre-school playgroup, who share the school's early years accommodation, has resulted in an excellent programme for transition into the Reception class. The school also works closely with the Diocese and accesses all available support and training. This has ensured that their partnership activities are outstanding and have a very positive impact on pupils' well-being.

Leadership makes a good contribution to community cohesion. The whole school community is a model of cohesion and there is a strong ethos of respect for all across the school. Pupils are very clear about their own religious identity but also respect and value the beliefs of others, including those who have no identified faith.



Staff and pupils share a highly inclusive vision, celebrating the similarities and differences within their own school community. Leaders and managers work well together to ensure that pupils learn about other faiths and recognise that not everyone in their neighbourhood may share their beliefs. The school is exemplary in the way in which it facilitates parents and carers joining in with collective worship and liturgies as well as the more academic side to the school's life.

## SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

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

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|---|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The school's capacity for sustained improvement</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| • how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education   | <b>3</b> |
| ❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress  | <b>3</b> |
| ❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress  | <b>2</b> |
| ❖ pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education  | <b>3</b> |
| • the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school   | <b>1</b> |
| • how well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| • the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education  | <b>3</b> |
| • the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education  | <b>3</b> |
| • the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs  | <b>2</b> |
| • the quality of collective worship provided by the school  | <b>1</b> |
| <b>How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| • 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   | <b>2</b> |
| • how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils  | <b>2</b> |
| • 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 | <b>2</b> |
| • how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well-being  | <b>1</b> |
| • how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion.  | <b>2</b> |