

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

School: St Bede's R.C. Primary School

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School URN: 108852

Headteacher: Mr Dominic Curran

Chair of Governors: Mr Stephen Hill

Inspector: Elaine White

Date of Inspection: 25 and 26 September 2012

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 smaller than average sized primary school which serves the parish of St Bede's in Washington. The school community is primarily English speaking and mainly of white British heritage.

The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average and the proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than the national average.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll: 214

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 77%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 15%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 0.4%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 7.6%

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 0%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 17%

Staffing

Number of full time teachers: 7

Number of part time teachers: 1

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 100%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 25%

Percentage of learning time given to Religious Education:

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 Bede's, Washington

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 school with a strong and vibrant Catholic ethos. The headteacher has built up a very committed staff team who want the school to be the best it can be. The school is a welcoming, friendly community with a strong family ethos. Senior leaders have been very successful in nourishing a school community that rejoices in a shared vision to maintain a friendly and welcoming ethos where all members understand and strive to live out the mission statement in daily interactions with each other. They are a dedicated staff who work well together as a team committed to raising pupils' attainment and progress. The headteacher and senior leadership team have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and areas identified for development are included in the school improvement plan. The involvement of the parish clergy as governors, as well as their regular visits for liturgical and other events, assists in embedding improvements in Religious Education. Areas for improvement from the last inspection have been addressed and developments are ongoing. Given the pace and effectiveness of developments, which are beginning to improve pupils' progress, the school demonstrates a good capacity to improve both the spiritual life of the school and the achievement of the pupils in Religious Education.

Standards attained in Religious Education and pupils' achievement is good however progress across the school is satisfactory. Pupils who have special educational needs are very well supported to develop their learning skills. The effective adult support ensures that pupils succeed in their learning, and is having a positive effect on their self-esteem and confidence to tackle challenges independently. The more able pupils however are not always given sufficient opportunities to achieve their full potential. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes towards their learning. They respond well to collective worship showing reverence and respect and the promotion of pupils' spiritual and moral development is good. They contribute well to the catholic life of the school.

The provision for Catholic Education is good. Teaching is good overall. In the classes where teachers have high expectations of pupils and set the right level of challenge for their work, pupils learning and progress is better. Monitoring and assessment procedures are in place throughout the school and pupils are given individual targets which are beginning to impact positively on pupil outcomes.

Marking in most classes is beginning to be used effectively to challenge pupils to improve their work, however it sometimes lacks specific focus which hinders pupils' progress. The Religious Education curriculum is good and improving. The quality of collective worship is good and is very well embedded within the school day with a variety of opportunities for worship. Parents and carers are kept well informed about their child's learning, progress and achievement.

Leadership and management is good, communicating high expectations to staff about securing improvement in standards. They effectively monitor and evaluate the Catholic Life of the school and have a clear direction and understanding of what is required to bring about improvement. There is a very positive and close relationship with the local parish and neighbouring parishes. Staff have a good understanding of the nature of a Catholic school and the school community gives real assent to the school's mission. This has had the impact of creating a caring and compassionate ethos which makes pupils feel valued. The dedication and commitment of all staff are instrumental in the drive to improve teaching and learning. Challenging but realistic plans are in place and are well detailed in the School Improvement Plan. The governing body discharge their responsibilities well and ensure all statutory and canonical responsibilities are met. Partnerships are well developed and promote catholic learning and well-being and the promotion of community cohesion is good.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- **Employ the school's systems for monitoring and evaluation in order to raise attainment and improve achievement in Religious Education by:**
 - **ensuring that all teachers use assessment information to plan challenging, differentiated activities which consistently build on and extend pupils' learning, especially the more able, to achieve higher levels.**
 - **Ensure that marking consistently provides information to pupils about how to improve their work and that pupils are given time to respond.**
- **Further develop the role of the senior leadership team in the monitoring of teaching and learning in Religious Education so that good practice can be shared and areas requiring development identified and acted upon.**
- **Provide more opportunities to further develop the role of governors in the monitoring of attainment and progress in Religious Education.**

PUPILS

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

2

The quality of pupils' learning is good however progress in Religious Education is only satisfactory overall. Pupils enter the school in the Reception year from starting points in Religious Education that are typical for their age. Progress is good in Early Years; however it slows down in key stage one (KS1) and lower key stage two (KS2) making progress across the rest of the school only satisfactory.

By the end of year 6, attainment is good with rapid progress being made in upper KS2. Those pupils identified as having a special educational need make good progress as they are very well supported by effective teaching assistants.

In those classes where systems for assessment and supporting pupils' learning are embedded, progress is good. Pupil tracking and moderation of work indicate that these strategies are beginning to have a positive impact on progress and standards. The majority of pupils enjoy learning.

Where teachers' expectations are high they concentrate extremely well as evidenced in a lesson about Helen Prejean and Oscar Romero, however, some of the more able pupils across the school are insufficiently challenged and could achieve more. Nevertheless, across the school there is an increasing sense of purpose about learning in Religious Education and pupils respond well to the praise and rewards they receive for good effort.

Pupils make a good contribution to the Catholic life of the school which has high priority across the school. The school motto is fully carried out by staff and pupils. Pupils are actively involved and take on responsibilities very enthusiastically such as the School Councillors and Special Friends to pupils in reception class. They respond willingly to the needs of those beyond the school and can articulate their views with confidence explaining the purpose of fundraising for various charities such as Romanian Shoebox Appeal. Pupils' views are noted and valued through an effective school council. They form trusting relationships with adults and respond well to the prayer life of the school. Pupils show a good understanding and the importance of key celebrations throughout the liturgical year in school and the parish community and understand that religious belief and spiritual values are important for many people.

Pupils' response to and participation in collective worship is good. Prayer is integral to the everyday life of the school and pupils are keen to participate and are at ease when praying with their school community. They listen and sing with enthusiasm and respond to acts of worship with reverence and respect. The 'Nurturing Human Wholeness' programme is integrated into the prayer life and contributes significantly to the strong ethos that pervades throughout the school. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the ethos statements and are able to reflect with reverence and a good understanding upon these and how they impact on their own lives. A prayer corner in each classroom impacts positively on the quality of prayer and provides pupils with stimuli for thought and reflection. Pupils observed using these areas reflected silently and were deep in thought. Pupils write their own prayers and are beginning to be more involved in leading, planning and preparing collective worship in their own classes. The introduction of the daily act of meditation is a strength of the

school. Stimulating displays in classrooms and around the school provide children with further enriched opportunities for thought and reflection.

PROVISION

How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good and improving although this is not always consistent throughout the school. Pupils' learning is better in classes where teachers have high expectations of pupils, set the right level of challenge for their work and help them improve by careful marking and advice to help them move on. In some lessons however, progress was slow because pupils were unclear about how to further improve their work, the lack of challenge and expectations of work were not high enough. Relationships between children, teachers and support staff are warm and constructive and contribute successfully to their obvious keenness to learn. The thoughtful use of daily periods of reflection and meditation were strengths of the lessons observed and impacted positively on teaching and learning.

Assessment and academic guidance are good. Procedures and strategies for the assessment of Religious Education are in place across the school and accurate data tracking systems to track pupils' progress successfully identifies where extra support is required. Marking in some classes is beginning to be used effectively to challenge pupils to improve their work however it sometimes lacks specific focus which hinders pupils in improving their work. Individual pupil targets are set and beginning to impact on pupil improvement. Not all staff however use data accurately to inform future planning and further learning. The school recognises this and has already begun to implement a more rigorous system to monitor the quality of teaching.

The Religious Education curriculum provided is good in meeting the needs and interests of the pupils. The school meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference with regard to curriculum time and the process of assessment is in line with Diocesan guidelines. The Religious Education curriculum contributes well to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils, particularly when pupils are given the opportunity to discuss and relate their learning to their own lives and feelings. It is further enhanced by providing pupils with a range of experiences such as presentations from the North East Blind Association. Overall, the Religious Education curriculum offered enables most pupils to enjoy lessons and have positive attitudes to learning.

The provision for collective worship is good and ensures that the spiritual needs of the pupils are well met. There is a clear policy for collective worship and the school uses a good range of strategies to ensure that collective worship is inclusive. Through a well planned programme of Masses, liturgies, assemblies and other liturgical celebrations, pupils are given many opportunities to participate in a range of Acts of Worship. Engagement with parents and the parish is good. A wide variety of forms of prayer, including traditional prayers, scripture, music, symbols and artefacts are modelled well for the pupils. There is a prayer focus in each class with well thought out resources impacting significantly on the quality of prayer and reflection. The school is now at the stage of seeking ways by which it can make more use of the children's own initiatives in planning, producing and leading prayer and worship independently and consistently.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

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

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good. Leaders have a clear vision which is undertaken and supported by the whole school community. The Catholic life of the school is given a high priority and catholic values and principles are promoted very well. The headteacher and leadership team have a deep commitment to the Church's Mission in education; personal development and high quality care are paramount. They are good role models providing very clear direction for improvement. They ensure that opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development are frequent and these have significant impact. The headteacher has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and the areas for improvement. Systems for monitoring and evaluation are in place and beginning to have a positive impact. The good leadership of the catholic life of the school ensures that all pupils are well cared for and nurtured in this happy, caring, safe and supportive environment.

The leadership and management of Religious Education are good. The Religious Education coordinator exudes energy and enthusiasm, giving good leadership clearly focused on raising achievement. He has a clear vision and sense of direction and understanding of what is required to bring about improvement and shares this with staff. His dedication and commitment are instrumental in the drive to provide high quality teaching and learning in Religious Education. The School Improvement Plan provides clear direction for the work and future developments in Religious Education. Monitoring, evaluation and assessment procedures are beginning to have a positive impact but need to be more consistent and rigorous when monitoring the quality of teaching. As a result the overall outcomes for most pupils are good.

The governing body fulfils its role well with regard to the Catholic life of the school and discharge their statutory and canonical responsibilities well. They are totally committed to upholding the strong, caring, inclusive ethos that fosters the excellent relationships which exist between the school and the parish family. The governing body is now at the stage where they are becoming more confident in their role and they are becoming more fully involved in evaluating the Catholic life of the school, offering challenge and support. However their role in monitoring attainment and progress in Religious Education requires further development.

Leaders effectively develop partnerships with other providers and organisations enabling pupils to develop and achieve well in areas in which the school alone could not provide .A range of partnership activities make a good contribution to pupils' well-being and to the Catholic life of the school as well as heightening pupils' awareness and understanding of the common good. They ensure that links with other Catholic primary schools and secondary school are well established.

The school's contribution to promote community cohesion is good. St Bede's school is a caring community in which everyone is included and supported in developing their unique potential within an atmosphere of love and respect which is clearly evident in the schools' policies, documents and practice. Visitors to school and visits out of school are used effectively to enable pupils to gain a better understanding of different faiths and cultures.

Pupils are helped to understand the Church's global mission through their support for many charities and through their involvement in local projects both e.g. St Cuthbert's Care, Great Ormond Street Hospital, and the involvement with Columbia Grange Special School.

The Religious Education curriculum has a positive impact on community cohesion promoting attitudes of respect and tolerance. Acts of worship are inclusive having a positive impact on community cohesion.

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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship 	2
How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well being 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion. 	2