

# DIOCESE OF MIDDLESBROUGH

Inspection of Religious Education  
Collective Worship  
and  
The Catholic Life of the School



**School:** St Aelred's RC Primary School

**Address:** Fifth Avenue  
York  
YO31 0QQ

**URN:** 121646  
**Head of School:** Suzanne Ulyett

**Chair:** Irene Shanks

**Date:** 4 and 5 July 2018

**Inspector:** Anne Parr  
Liz King

**Date & Grade of Last Inspection:** December 2012      **Grade:** 2

**Overall Grade for this Inspection:** 3

A Report from:  
The Diocese of Middlesbrough Schools' Service  
Section 48 Inspection Team  
50a The Avenue  
Linthorpe  
Middlesbrough TS5 6QT

## INTRODUCTION

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Bishop of Middlesbrough (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school. 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 Religious Inspectors and Advisers.

### What Inspection Grades mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding Catholic school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a Catholic school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	These features, though of adequate quality, require improvement to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate Catholic school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils.

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Aelred's RC Primary School is an average sized primary school serving the parish of St Aelred's in Tang Hall in the eastern suburbs of York. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds with 25% of pupils in receipt of pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals). The large majority of pupils are white British. The school has experienced some turbulence in leadership in recent years. After the retirement of a longstanding headteacher, the newly appointed headteacher was only in post for a short time before leaving. The school then moved into a federation for a short period of time with an executive headteacher who was also executive headteacher of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs in York; at St Aelred's, a head of school was also appointed. This model was in place for two years until a decision was made to revert to a single headteacher model. The current experienced headteacher has been in post since November 2017; the appointment is permanent. The former head of school therefore returned to her post as deputy headteacher and Religious Education (RE) co-ordinator.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The following activities took place:

- Inspectors observed eight RE lessons
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the RE co-ordinator (who is also the deputy headteacher), the chair of governors, parish priest, pupils' Mini-Vinnies group, a group of year six pupils, school Chaplaincy team and a group of parents
- Scrutiny of work from all year groups including discussions with year two, year four and year six teachers
- Observation of class-based acts of Collective Worship and whole-school Collective Worship
- Observation of a voluntary lunchtime prayer group
- Scrutiny of a range of documentation including: plans for improvement, Diocesan School Self-Evaluation Document (DSED), monitoring records, records of Collective Worship, RE co-ordinator's files, progress and tracking data, headteacher's reports to governors, staff-meeting records and newsletters to parents.
- Discussions with pupils throughout the two days
- Observations of displays and sacred spaces

**Pupil Catchment:**

Number of pupils on roll: 203 (plus 26 part time nurseys pupils)

Planned Admission Number of Pupils: 30

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 99/203 48.8%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian Denominations: 19/203 9.4%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 3/203 1.5%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 82/203 40.4%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 12% including 5 pupils with an Education Health and RC Care Plan (EHCP)

**Teaching Staff:**

Full-time Teachers: 7 (including headteacher)

Part-time Teachers: 2

Percentage of Catholic Teachers: 56%

**Support Staff:**

Full-time Classroom Support Staff: 1

Part-time Classroom Support Staff: 17

Percentage of Catholic Classroom Support Staff: 50%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 2

**Percentage of learning time given to R.E:**

10% in all key stages

**Parishes served by the School: St Aelred's**

# 1. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

3
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## MAIN FINDINGS

St Aelred's is a welcoming and friendly school with a strong caring ethos; it is a very inclusive community where everyone is valued. Parents and parishioners think highly of the school and respect all that it achieves and provides for its pupils. Parish links are strong and relationships within the whole community are good.

However, there are a number of areas for improvement; notably in how leaders, managers and governors monitor and evaluate RE and plan for improvements. Lack of these activities over quite a long period of time has affected the standards and quality of RE in school. Most pupils generally enjoy and understand the importance of RE. They show interest and engagement in the majority of lessons but progress and attainment for pupils is not consistent throughout the school. The quality of teaching over time is variable. Teachers are very keen to improve their expertise and strategies for teaching RE but need greater guidance and advice.

Outcomes for pupils are good in other areas which reflect the religious character of the school. The quality of Collective Worship is good and well organised by those who are responsible for chaplaincy provision. Pupils engage and respond well to a variety of Collective Worship; they participate respectfully in presiding and praying. They enjoy taking responsibility for it. Their joyful and whole-hearted singing is especially noticeable.

The good Catholic Life of the school is apparent in its parish links and in the charitable activities and opportunity for prayer which reflect the well-established Catholic character of the school. Pupils are involved and active in the Catholic Life of the school.

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

Improve the teaching of RE across the whole school by:

- making greater use of diocesan Continued Professional Development and monitoring its impact on practice
- ensuring all teachers understand and integrate 'driver words' into learning objectives and success criteria and that they refer to them in marking and feedback
- embedding an effective whole-school approach to use of 'Working walls' 'Big Questions' and opportunities for 'Response'
- developing a more innovative and creative approach across the whole school to improve outcomes and engagement for pupils

Improve monitoring and planning for improvements in RE by:

- setting it as a school improvement priority
- distributing the leadership for RE, Catholic Life and Collective Worship

Improve leadership and governance by:

- establishing a rigorous system to monitor and evaluate provision for RE
- planning and implementing improvements
- monitoring standards

Enhance and reflect the Catholic Life of the school including Collective Worship by:

- increasing the quantity and quality of displays around the school

## 2. PUPILS

### **How good outcomes are for pupils, taking into account variations between groups**

Overall, outcomes for pupils are good.

Pupils participate constructively in the Catholic Life of the school and understand their own responsibility for it at a level which is age-appropriate. Their recent contributions to work on the school mission statement show a sense of a faith community, 'we are brothers and sisters' and 'we have to encourage people in faith'. There is an active Mini-Vinnies group which meets regularly to discuss and plan fund-raising events and other charitable outreach work 'to make the world a better place because Jesus tells us to'. Activities have ranged from an Advent 'Run for Malawi' event to gathering contributions for a local foodbank. Some year six pupils, acting on their own initiative raised money for Cancer Research based on work they had done in RE lessons. The chaplaincy team prepare liturgies and prayers independently. Its pupil members spoke very seriously about their responsibility and are clearly developing a sense of vocation from their role. Pupils appreciate that school is a safe place where everyone is valued and learns to consider and look after each other. For example, a number of pupils and the parents interviewed mentioned the use of the 'Buddy Bench' on the playground so that no child ever need feel lonely or left out. Pupils are tolerant and respectful of each other and recognise that some of their classmates have difficulties and that they are called to be understanding and patient. Strong parish links mean that pupils frequently take on responsibilities in the regular family Mass and also in class Masses to which the whole community is invited. Pupils are familiar with important celebrations in the Church's liturgical year both in school and at church and have an appropriate depth of knowledge about them.

Most pupils enjoy their work in RE; pupils generally apply themselves steadily to complete the tasks given to them with a few isolated exceptions. Behaviour for learning is generally good and classroom relationships are good too. In the best lessons pupils are immediately engaged in their learning, are active from the beginning and so the level of enjoyment and enthusiasm is high. This is not consistent across the school.

From the baseline assessment at the beginning of the Reception class, all groups of pupils make good progress across key stage one (KS1) with the large majority of pupils working at or above the expected standard by the end of KS1. Pupils continue to make progress until upper key stage two (KS2) when attainment drops and there is underperformance which affects some pupils, particularly the more able pupils. Productivity and depth of understanding falter. In some classes pupils know how to improve their work but again this is not consistent across the school. Pupils with special educational needs (SEND) are well supported through differentiation and classroom support.

Pupils are involved in Collective Worship in classroom liturgies in most classes. Pupils participate well in other key liturgies and in whole-school liturgies. They sometimes take the lead, for example in the Lenten Stations of the Cross. They enter, participate and leave all Collective Worship areas with respect and reverence. The chaplaincy team take the lead in preparing and presiding at the Thursday lunchtime prayer group; a year three pupil said 'I enjoy the quiet and saying my own prayers on Thursday'. Pupils prepare sacred spaces in classrooms with suitable artefacts and liturgical cloths. Whole school worship is clearly a well-established and familiar part of the school's prayer life in which all engage. The music and singing create a joyful experience for all pupils and adults and it is a strength of the

school. In particular, SEND pupils can participate in Collective Worship because of the school's specific strategy in using plenty of music, actions and signing so that they can join in fully. Pupils know how to be reflective, pray silently and act reverently. With the guidance of teachers, pupils in most classes use the 'Gather, Word, Response and Mission' format at a level suited to their age in class liturgies.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well do pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>

### 3. PROVISION

#### How effective the provision is for Catholic education

The provision for Catholic education is good.

In almost all classrooms pupils show interest and learning is purposeful, but in some KS2 classes not all pupils are engaged in their work. Staff have worked hard to manage the behaviours and attitude of the most challenging pupils in year six so that the pupils are included and do achieve at some level. In the best classrooms, the quality of teaching and planned activities, keeps pupils interested in their learning. For example in EYFS, high quality questioning and a range of engaging strategies and resources which were extended into continuous provision, resulted in a sense of excitement and excellent responses from the pupils. Similarly in year three, a range of strategies related to the Baptism of Christ resulted in a good level of pupil activity and engagement. Well-embedded and well-understood use of the 'Big Question', driver words and success criteria meant that pupils knew exactly what they had to do to progress. This had been carefully planned across a series of lessons. Such good practice is not consistent across the whole school although elements of it are just beginning in other classes. In some classes, too much teacher talk slows progress in the lesson. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed to support less able pupils but there is sometimes insufficient challenge for higher ability pupils; work is usually differentiated. Teachers, including those other than Catholic, have sufficient subject knowledge but lack some confidence to engage pupils by using a more creative approach. Although staff make use of levels of attainment, the use of success criteria based around driver words to fine-tune pupils' understanding of expectations is not established in most classes. Therefore, marking is not always effective in providing meaningful targets and comments to help pupils make the most progress they possibly can. The opportunity to reflect on their learning at the end of a topic, to respond through liturgy and to express their thoughts is only just beginning. There are effective systems to record and track outcomes for pupils; most teachers can demonstrate and articulate progress for a range of pupils. Effective use of 'Working Walls', driver words, and 'Big Questions' is not embedded across the school and so is not yet having a lasting impact on progress and attainment.

The RE curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. Coverage in pupils' books reflects the required amount of time dedicated to the teaching of RE.

All pupils in school, especially the most vulnerable, benefit from the range of social, emotional and pastoral care provided to improve their spiritual, moral and academic development beyond the statutory RE curriculum. For example, the school choir and school musicians, as well as being involved in Liturgies, Masses and Collective Worship go out to serve and perform both in the local community and further afield. Regular 'well-being' meetings are held about particularly vulnerable pupils to co-ordinate provision for them. Standards of behaviour are high amongst the overwhelming majority of pupils; through RE and Collective Worship, pupils know what is right and wrong and they know that it is important to care for those around them. For example, year five have been inspired by their recent Universal Church RE topic to set up a school Eco Club.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good. The level of engagement amongst pupils is high. Pupils are serious, reverent and sincere in their actions and responses. The prayer-life and Collective Worship provided by the school is varied; it reflects the Catholic character of the school and the Liturgical year. These are open to the whole school community and are well-attended. A range of music and hymns organised by the deputy head teacher but involving pupils, greatly enhances Collective Worship and the spiritual life of the whole community. Pupils have opportunities at key times of the Church's



year to lead and participate in Liturgies, prayers and Masses. Priest, parents and parishioners comment on the quality of these and on the knowledge and skill of the pupils involved.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>

## 4. LEADERS, MANAGERS AND GOVERNORS

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

Leaders, managers and governors show a loyal commitment to the church's mission and to the spiritual and moral development of St Aelred's pupils. The school's vision, values and mission statement are currently under review but the process is not yet complete and so has had no fresh impact on the school community. Leaders have developed an active chaplaincy team consisting of pupils, staff and parishioners. Since being appointed, the headteacher has reported termly to the governors' curriculum committee detailing the work and future plans of the chaplaincy team. The RE co-ordinator plays a pivotal role in the good links between school, governors and parish; the headteacher's regular newsletter to parents highlights and promotes the Catholic life of the school and the work of the chaplaincy team. The parish priest is a very regular and involved visitor to the school. He speaks warmly of the pupils' enthusiasm and involvement in all aspects of the Catholic Life of the school and reports to other governors on this. The Catholic Life of the school has improved based on relatively recently implemented plans; it is not yet clear whether these improvements will have a lasting effect on outcomes for pupils; thorough and systematic monitoring is not embedded. However, parents, parishioners, pupils and staff do have great respect for all aspects of the school's Catholic life and, in particular, value the quality of Collective Worship in all its forms. A new induction pack has been shared with the newest member of staff.

Governors are fully committed and supportive of the school. After the period of turbulence within the school's leadership, leaders, managers and governors decided that other areas of the school's performance needed attention before prioritising RE. The RE co-ordinator also spent some time as head of school which impacted on her role as co-ordinator. Governors have not been sure about what needs to be done to raise the quality of teaching and learning in RE as monitoring and planning for improvements has been lacking in both frequency and rigour. Consequently, they have been unable to hold the school to account. The school recognises this in its latest denominational self-evaluation document. Current improvement plans for RE identify what needs to be done but need to be more detailed, rigorously implemented, monitored and evaluated. Staff are now beginning to benefit from professional development in staff-meetings and a very recent focus on RE; impact is limited and not yet secure.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well leaders, managers and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school, including collective worship, and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils</li> </ul>	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well leaders, managers and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils</li> </ul>	3