



St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School and Byron College

Westway, Peterlee, Co Durham, SR8 1DE

School Unique Reference Number: **114327**

Inspection dates:	26 – 27 May 2016
Lead inspector:	David Lewis
Team inspector:	Steve Jones

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 Catholic Comprehensive School and Byron College is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- The Catholic Life of St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School and Byron College is outstanding in the way the governors, headteacher and staff have transformed the school as a vibrant, aspirational and living Catholic community. Prayer, liturgies and celebration are central to the life of the school which fully lives out its mission "Aduvate Domino" ("With the Lord's help"). Excellent links with the parishes, wider community, and the diocese are tangible expressions of the remarkable commitment of the headteacher and governing body to Catholic education;
- Collective Worship is outstanding overall with students and staff leading prayer and liturgies throughout the school. Collective Worship is the starting point of and central to the daily lives of pupils and staff with a wide range of liturgies. The highest priority is given to prayer and Collective Worship across the school by the headteacher, and the Religious Education team, including the chaplain, to ensure a deep understanding of the traditions of the Church.
- Religious Education is good overall because whilst progress for pupils and students has been transformed, the quality of teaching and assessment is consistently outstanding; standards of attainment are not yet outstanding. However, leaders and managers have the vision and determination to maintain the drive for pupils and students to achieve the best possible outcomes.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, those supported by the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is average.
- A very small number of students who have behavioural difficulties are educated off-site at The Green School, some full-time and some part-time.
- Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes in staffing. This includes the headteacher who took up his post in January 2015.
- The governing body has undergone significant changes, including the chair of the governing body.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Share the consistently outstanding practice of the Catholic Life of the school across other schools in the diocese and beyond by:
- Improve the engagement in and response by all pupils and students in acts of Collective Worship by:
- Raise outcomes at both GCSE and A level so they are outstanding by:

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

1

- 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.

1
1
1

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

- The school's motto "Aduvate Domino" ("With the Lord's help") inspires St Bede's as a school centred on prayer and the life of Jesus. Pupils and students spoke warmly of their involvement in the Catholic Life of the school, their deep sense of belonging to this Worshipping Community, their regular involvement in fund raising for those less fortunate than themselves including a recent performance of 'Beatles and Friends'.
- Behaviour was never less than excellent both in the classroom and around the school. Pupils and students readily identify St Bede's as a community where forgiveness is at its centre and where 'you then move on'. Pupils were confident in their religious identity, celebrating their Catholic faith as well as other world religions. The school was characterised by mutual respect, and relationships between pupils and staff were excellent.
- There was a profound sense of belonging to a supportive Catholic community. Links with parish and diocesan activities are well developed including regular events at the Emmaus Youth Village, retreats, and pilgrimages to Lourdes. Students of all ages take responsibility for themselves and their actions, demonstrating mutual respect, which results in a calm, harmonious and safe environment. They are justifiably proud of their chapel, showing respect when attending liturgies.

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

- The school's mission statement clearly puts Christ at the centre of every aspect of school life. It is a clear expression of the vision of the governors and headteacher to steer the school in its quest to ensure all students achieve outstanding outcomes and reach their full potential, and also offer a deep faith experience with Christ clearly at the centre of all aspects of school life.
- During the inspection, it was clear that all pupils and staff really do aspire to truly live out the mission statement with a tangible sense of community at all levels. The chaplain is the lynchpin between the pastoral system and the wider school community. Students and staff spoke glowingly of her commitment to each individual and the excellent links with the clergy, parishes, wider community and diocese. For example, Mass is celebrated weekly by the local clergy and the school chaplain works tirelessly with local parishes to produce liturgies that reflect the liturgical calendar of the Church.

- The school has reviewed its pastoral policies, rooted in the values of the Gospel, and put in appropriate structures to support pupils to achieve their potential. The leadership team is not afraid to take risks and think differently in order to best serve the many complex needs of students.
- Personal, social and health education and relationship and sex education programmes are sensitively designed and delivered in modules by staff who have an interest in and have received significant training to support and nurture pupils in their personal development. Staff spoke warmly of the induction and support they receive from the school community, especially with regard to the distinctiveness of St Bede's as a Catholic school. As staff join the school and through regular continuing professional development and briefings, all staff are aware of the expectation that they are leaders of the faith.
- Staff and students have a growing awareness of and are confident in witnessing the beliefs and values of the Catholic Church.

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

- The exceptional leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the fully committed governing body, have brought the school on a remarkable journey in the last 18 months. They offer a deep faith experience with Christ clearly at the centre of all aspects of school life.
- The cohesive team of governors and staff have dedicated themselves to the building up of a Catholic learning community which sees as its primary mission the inclusion of all students giving priority to those with special needs and challenges. Their commitment to continuing review and evaluation of their leadership ensures that they are a highly effective team.
- The headteacher is strongly supported by a dedicated and able leadership team and enthusiastic staff who do everything they can to ensure that the spiritual, pastoral and academic needs of all are met. Local clergy and governors are very supportive and absolutely committed to ensuring that Catholic education of the highest standard is provided for all.
- Pupils and students are rightly proud of their Catholic school, and recognise the transformation that has taken place. Self-evaluation is rigorous and effective in promoting and delivering this transformation which is clearly focussed on delivering an outstanding Catholic school. Pupils and staff spoke knowledgeably of their personal involvement in and personal commitment to the Catholic Life of the school. For example the school recognises the importance of each individual person and this is reflected in the way people are welcomed into the school.
- Parents are welcome partners in the work of the school and the sense of a team approach of home-school-parish was palpable. This is a school where all people matter and the staff and students are genuinely proud of their Catholic community. The governing body has reviewed its membership, structures and agendas so that the development of the Catholic Life of the school is the starting point. They are fully aware of liturgical celebrations because they attend them, and are actively involved in the pursuit of academic excellence because they check for themselves by regularly visiting the school, meeting with link departments and receiving reports from and challenge leaders. The impact is that this subtle yet highly effective leadership has brought about a single vision that permeates the whole school, and staff collectively are more than willing to put that vision into action.

- Leadership at all levels within the school is constantly being developed in order to promote potential and share best practice. Central to this shared vision is desire to constantly self-evaluate and drive improvement.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

- 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.

1
1
1

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

- The school’s motto “Adivate Domino” (“With the Lord’s help”) inspires St Bede’s as a school centred on prayer and the life of Jesus. Pupils and students spoke warmly of their involvement in Collective Worship, preparing and bringing their own prayers to tutor time with their form, and the impact it has made on their formation.
- End of term whole school masses in the sports hall are characterised by pupil and student-led worship including a student music group which leads the singing. Prayer is central to St Bede’s and pupils and students are confident in preparing and leading form prayer as well as masses which take place in the beautiful school chapel each Thursday.
- In assemblies and form time, inspectors observed a variety of approaches including the use of scripture and prayer led by pupils. The atmosphere was always reverential and behaviour was excellent.
- Both staff and pupils spoke warmly of the sensitivity to the openly inclusive approach of the school in both the Catholic and other faiths. This includes an excellent staff induction.
- The school has produced a book of prayers for staff to use before the start of meetings which staff new to the school particularly appreciate. Whilst pupils and students were reverential in Collective Worship, led prayers with confidence and spoke of the inspirational impact prayer and liturgy has on their daily lives and formation, the school should seek to improve the engagement in and response by all pupils and students in Collective Worship.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- The whole school policy for prayer and worship is creative, innovative and contemporary. Prayer underpins the daily life of the school, supporting a mission statement that is a pivotal document, central to all school planning and initiatives.
- Pupils and staff are equally comfortable in leading and participating in prayer. They cherish and value Collective Worship as well as the regular annual training and continuing support.
- Chaplaincy provision is outstanding and continues to develop, supporting the pastoral and spiritual needs of everyone. The chaplain, supported by local clergy, plan and demonstrate a wide range of prayer and liturgical celebrations and the

enthusiasm for liturgy, prayer and worship is a distinguishing feature of the school with a school chapel that is very much at the heart of this living and celebrating Catholic community.

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

- Collective Worship involves every member of the school community, who readily contribute to and take part. Quality experiences are planned with the same attention to detail that characterises the transformation of the school and work of the Religious Education department. Pupils readily participate and are mindful of their deepening formation.
- Each teacher has, as one of their three performance management targets, a Catholic ethos target, which they take as seriously as their commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes for each individual.
- Annual staff training and continuing support characterises the ethos of the school with its commitment to all staff as well as pupils in openly promoting a vibrant Catholic community with a tangible sense of belonging.
- The school is inclusive, loving and compassionate towards all and looks to personalise any care to individuals based on their particular circumstances.
- Leaders and managers are highly visible, lead by example and embody the mission of the school. Governors monitor the quality of Collective Worship with regular reports to the governing body meetings as well as experiencing for themselves weekly mass at the school and other liturgies and end of term masses, the engagement of pupils and staff, and the impact on the personal development of each member of the school community.
- Questionnaires and pupil voice statements recognise the continuing development that takes place and they have embraced change willingly and whole heartedly. This is epitomised by the way the governing body has led the transformation of the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

- 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.

2
1
1

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

- Using the *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education* as the basis, the school has developed the Religious Education scheme of work to ensure maximum access for all pupils using a high level of creativity, increased religious literacy skills and critical thinking skills.
- Pupils and students have a passion for and a delight in studying Religious Education at St Bede's. They state they are challenged at least as much as in English and mathematics lessons and for many it is their favourite subject (and their favourite teacher). In every lesson observed by inspectors, not a single pupil was off task for a single moment: not a second was lost in each and every lesson seen. The consistency was remarkable and behaviour for learning was excellent in every lesson. Most pupils concentrate well and are rarely off task.
- Pupils work steadily and at times show high levels of enthusiasm, as well as a keenness and commitment to succeed. A key feature of lessons was pupils' ability to use religious language in a meaningful way alongside their understanding of the implications of belief for their everyday lives. Staff are confident, knowledgeable and have a good rapport with pupils, allowing them to articulate their knowledge and ideas and be praised for doing so.
- Data tracking is robust and highly effective: there is very clear evidence that gaps are closing significantly for all groups of pupils across the school in Religious Education, which is confirmed by external validation and moderation working in partnership with other Catholic schools and Local Authority officers.
- The highly imaginative approach to teaching and learning in Religious Education across the school ensures pupils learn to work independently, use their imagination and apply learnt skills in a variety of contexts. Learning across all key stages shows progression and a real desire to improve levels of attainment.
- A level uptake has increased from 6% of the cohort to 12% in the last two years. Standards of attainment at GCSE are broadly in line with diocesan averages but there is clear and significant evidence to show that the gaps are closing dramatically and there should be a significant upward shift in Religious Education outcomes this summer and beyond.
- The annual diocesan data return for 2015 shows excellent 3 levels of progress overall, with actual progress between key stage two and four 50% higher than expected progress, and 30 percentage points higher than expected. A*-C expected and actual are very similar but A*-A in 2015 was 33% higher than expected and over five percentage points higher than expected.

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

- Thoughtful, effective and skilful questioning challenges pupils and supports progress at all levels. Teaching assistants have a very good understanding of the teaching of Religious Education and they effectively interact with pupils to support their learning and pastoral needs.
- The pupils show a real interest and enthusiasm in Religious Education, they have an excellent attitude to learning and were happy and confident to share their understanding of their faith. As a result, every lesson observed by inspectors was outstanding, and pupils were openly enthusiastic in class and learnt extremely well.
- Lesson observations, confirmed by thorough and robust tracking data, indicate almost all pupils are making rapid and sustained progress. Teachers were enthusiastic, creative and imaginative in their lesson planning and delivery, ensuring every pupil was engaged in their learning every moment, often with creative activities.
- Homework is regularly set, and the marking of books is a particular strength of the Religious Education department, developing a dialogue with teacher and pupil to enhance learning where thorough constructive feedback (in red pen) was an integral part of the learning process with pupils reflecting on their work to date and how to improve their levels of attainment and achievement (green pen). In discussions, every pupil knew and understood their current level of attainment and achievement and what they had to do to improve their work.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is implicit in each lesson and continues to be monitored, evaluating its impact across the school.

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

- The remarkable transformational journey by the school in the past 18 months is a result of highly effective, cogent targeted planning and strategic action, with self-evaluation which is focused, thorough and accurate. There is clear and significant evidence that attainment, already broadly in line with diocesan averages, should make a significant upward shift this summer and beyond, though three levels of progress between key stage two and four was excellent in 2015 .
- Tracking and monitoring indicate at least good progress and rapidly closing gaps across all groups. The inspirational head of department leads her team as a partnership of teaching and learning, with all lessons observed as outstanding. She has inspired both her team and pupils to strive to achieve their best in Religious Education and has made Religious Education a lead department of the school.
- Students and staff (including those of other faiths and traditions) speak movingly of the profound impact attending and working at the school has had on their moral and spiritual development.
- The detailed, thorough and consistent curriculum is planned to ensure a very wide range of activities to engage pupils and to inspire them to achieve their best. The liturgical life of the Catholic Church and other faiths is examined in detail so that pupils have a very good understanding of the Catholic and other world faiths. The department has its own suite of rooms, well-resourced and with good display. The school fully meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference with 10% of curriculum time at key stage three and key stage four and 5% in the sixth form in an exciting 'Contemporary Issues' programme of which all students attend and speak very positively. Sacramental preparation is given the highest priority including the

confirmation preparation programme which is held in the school, working with local clergy and parishes and organised by the chaplain. Pupils talked very positively of the preparation programme held in school and the confirmation service as a key moment in their formation.

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.

1

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.

1

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

1

SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School and Byron College
Unique reference number	114327
Local authority	Durham
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	Mr A McCourt
Executive head teacher	Mr T B Tapping
Date of previous school inspection	May 2011
Telephone number	0191 5876220
Email address	enquiries@st-bedes.sch.uk