



St Bede's Catholic School and Sixth Form College

Consett Road, Lanchester, County Durham, DH7 ORD

School Unique Reference Number: **138172**

Inspection dates:	17 – 18 October 2019
Lead inspector:	Meg Baines
Team inspector:	Rachael Gundlach

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Religious Education:		Outstanding	1
Collective Worship:		Outstanding	1

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Bede's Catholic School and Sixth Form College is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- St Bede's is a deeply committed and caring Catholic community, characterised by outstanding leadership and dedicated staff. A strong Catholic ethos permeates all aspects of school life. Catholic Life is outstanding and can be found in the relationships between staff and pupils. High on the agenda is charitable giving.
- Collective Worship is outstanding and highly effective. Pupils often plan for and lead prayers and liturgies. The lay chaplain, her chaplaincy ambassadors and school leaders work closely together to provide opportunities for Collective Worship. Pupils speak with knowledge and understanding about their faith.
- The quality of Religious Education is outstanding. Progress and attainment in Religious Education have risen significantly over the last year and have become a strength of the school. Teaching is consistently good with much outstanding practice.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Bede's is a larger than average Catholic secondary school located in rural North West Durham.
- Pupils come from a wide social and economic background, some from the most deprived areas in the country. Pupils travel long distances and almost all are 'bussed in'.
- The proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities is below average as is the number eligible for pupil premium.
- Numbers of pupils identified as SEND support and having Education Health and Care plans is above the national average.
- St Bede's converted to an academy in June 2012 and became a teaching school in September 2014 as a single academy.
- The headteacher is a national leader in education.
- There are 1,383 pupils on roll with a PAN of 220.
- 68% of pupils are baptised Catholics with 22% from other Christian faiths.
- 40 out of 92 teachers are Catholics. 13 teachers (6 full time) teach in the Religious Education department

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Ensure pupils are secure in their knowledge and understanding of key concepts by:
 - continuing to monitor the effectiveness of systems for marking and feedback, particularly at key stage 3.
- Increase pupil participation in Collective Worship by:
 - developing further opportunities for pupils to take the initiative in creating and leading their own worship in the school setting.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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- 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.

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

- Almost all pupils at St Bede's are committed to the school's mission. They benefit greatly from being part of a Catholic community and are involved in a wide variety of Catholic Life activities. Pupils are aware of how the mission relates to them personally. Their behaviour around school and attitude towards staff and each other are outstanding and reflect a commitment to their faith.
- Almost all pupils are aware of what it means to be part of a Catholic community. They are alert to the needs of others and embrace opportunities to demonstrate this through their charitable efforts in school and beyond the school gates. Each year group works for a given charity, including Saint Vincent de Paul, Air Ambulance, St Cuthbert's Care, CAFOD, MacMillan, Willowburn Hospice, local foodbank Food4You and the Blackfriars Project. Pupils recently took part in the Dusk Walk with the De Paul group, putting themselves in the shoes of homeless and disenfranchised people. Pupils spoke eloquently about their experiences. Pupils speak confidently also about their experiences on retreat.
- Pupils were able to articulate occasions which led them to seek support from school on a personal level. They found this service highly supportive, confidential and an aid to their personal development. The school counsellor is a highly valued member of staff and is known by staff and pupils alike. She works closely with the designated safeguarding lead, special needs staff and senior leaders to great effect.
- Pastoral support in general is a strength of the school. The lay chaplain also plays a role in this area. Strong pastoral care for all is appreciated by pupils and staff. The recent addition of Well-being Wednesdays enables staff to punctuate their busy week with a time out at the end of the day on Wednesday. This highlights the focus the school places on well-being across the community.
- St Bede's offers a well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme along with specialist taught relationships and sex education (RSE) programme. Pupils say they enjoy these sessions and appear confident in their own stage of physical, emotional and spiritual growth. Sixth form students say that these are valuable lessons for life.

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

- The school's mission statement is depicted in cross form throughout the school. It highlights key words which pupils can relate and readily refer to. It is highly visible. The Catholic Life team, known as chaplaincy ambassadors help shape and create opportunities for pupils and staff to develop their own faith.
- All staff are fully committed to the Catholic Life of the school. On-going induction and staff formation combine to strengthen everyone's engagement with the Catholic Life of the school.
- Pupils are supported in order to take part in events such as the Dusk Walk with De Paul. They have attended a variety of events including The Source, Flame, Summer Festival (God Camp), one member has participated in the Youth Council for the last four years. Pupils have John Paul II awards available to them. The school also continues to work on projects in their own community such as the local food bank.
- Chaplaincy provision is exemplary, effectively supporting the Catholic Life of the school. The lay chaplain works closely with parishes to provide preparations for pupils to be confirmed. Last year 45 pupils were confirmed following the school's programme.
- Staff speak passionately about the strength of relationships in the school and were able to highlight areas of Catholic Life which affected their own subject.
- The Catholic character of the school is evident in its environment with high impact visual signs of the Catholic nature of the school in every public space.
- High standards of behaviour are promoted by staff who themselves are strong role models. The hugely successful pastoral system supports the themes of forgiveness and reconciliation.
- The PSHE programme references the need to care for our common home. GCSE, general sixth form and A level Religious Education programmes all support the imperative to care for every human person.
- The school theme, 'The Best Version of You' is in every public space and is understood and appreciated by all. The evidence for this can be seen across the school in the relationships that exist between staff and pupils and amongst the staff themselves. A strong and empowering Catholic ethos is apparent when speaking to pupils, staff, governors and parents. Induction of new staff is in place. Staff use retreats and professional development days as part of their on-going formation. These are led by key staff and outside speakers. There is a regular programme of induction in place, linked to the school's status as a teaching school.
- Pastoral care is strong. Policies are in place which provide high levels of care for all, with an emphasis on care for the most vulnerable in the community. This is often carried out quietly, confidentially and sensitively, ensuring policy is converted to practice.
- The relationships and sex education programme is well established. Careful monitoring of the programme ensures it is effectively delivered by key staff. The programme runs alongside the school PSHE programme which is delivered by form staff in a dedicated lesson every week. Schemes of work celebrate and reinforce Catholic teachings and principles in both PSHE and RSE.

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

- Leaders and governors are highly ambitious for the Catholic Life of the school, supporting the headteacher in his mission to develop and sustain the strong ethos evident in the school. They are actively involved in its evaluation and challenge when and where appropriate. There is a special interest governor whose focus is Growing in Faith and the Catholic Life of the school. The governors in general take a lead role in scrutinising the Catholic Life and regard themselves as a critical friend, ensuring monitoring is in place and high standards are maintained.
- The development of Catholic Life by leaders and governors is evident. Governors say that Catholic Life is critical to the life and the ethos of the school and see Catholic Life development as a core leadership responsibility.
- An accurate diocesan self-evaluation form and school monitoring records demonstrate a level of self-challenge and an understanding of what it means to have Catholic Life as a focus.
- Discussions about developing the Catholic Life of the school are on-going and attract the attention of staff, pupils and the parent body who value the strong ethos it engenders. This is evidenced in parent and student questionnaires.
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) occurs frequently and engages all staff. As a teaching school there is a constant focus on the authentic Catholic nature of the school and those new to teaching benefit from an extremely well planned programme to this effect.
- Staff well-being is paramount. For example in a morning session it was noted that all staff were offered the opportunity to receive a free flu jab, highlighting the nurturing nature of St Bede's. Staff left the session visibly uplifted.
- The school has successful strategies for communicating with parents. One parent stated that 'St Bede's is prepared to go the extra mile' and another was pleased that staff 'genuinely know and love your child'. Issues around concerns were resolved and parents were confident that issues like bullying were effectively dealt with. Parents are supportive of the school's mission.
- St Bede's is diligent in its response to diocesan policies and initiatives and actively promotes the Bishop's vision for the diocese throughout the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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- 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.

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

- High standards of progress in GCSE and A level Religious Education this year demonstrate the department's commitment to driving standards up. A number of pupils achieved outstanding progress.
- Following specific targeted intervention and a renewed focus on teaching and learning, almost all groups of pupils including those with additional needs made good progress.
- Pupils are religiously literate and demonstrate very good subject knowledge. They are able to express their ideas and thoughts well, can think ethically and show excellent recall of topics covered. The current programme of study ensures that both engagement and continuity exist across the key stages. This continuity allows for linear learning and enables pupils to build on prior knowledge.
- In every lesson seen, all pupils were actively engaged in learning, showing a real commitment to improving and making progress. They all are aware of what to do to improve and most were able to articulate how they have made progress.
- Pupils relish their Religious Education lessons, approaching the topics with interest and enthusiasm. They respond extremely well to both teacher directed parts of lessons and to group or quiet work. They are keen to please their teachers, either by responding to questions or by working sensibly in groups.
- Behaviour in all lessons seen was outstanding. Pupils were never off task and all appeared to enjoy their lessons. Pupils spoke of their enjoyment and their appreciation of their teachers. Relationships between pupils and staff are exemplary.
- Pupils are proud of their achievements in Religious Education. The quality of work in class across all the key stages is exemplary.

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

- Teachers in the Religious Education department are highly professional, effective in their planning and deliver high quality lessons which inspire their pupils. The systems used in the department to recapitulate previous work and consolidate is proving highly effective.
- The majority of teaching is outstanding and never less than good.
- Teachers show high levels of confidence in their delivery. Many are experts in their subject. Those who are not have an extremely good understanding of the subject themselves and

confidently inspire their learners.

- A wide range of pedagogies is employed, demonstrating that the programme had been thoughtfully planned in order to reach all groups.
- Staff ensure that almost all pupils are involved in evaluating how they are achieving through peer marking and 'live marking' by teachers who also give verbal feedback. Highly effective use of questioning was seen providing further opportunities for feedback, encouragement and praise. Very good use of additional adults in the classrooms was observed, effectively optimising learning for those who needed support.
- Teachers consistently use time effectively to maximise learning. All lessons were carried out with good pace and in most cases demonstrated a real passion for the subject.
- Pupils respect their teachers' enthusiasm and respond accordingly. This leads in turn to high levels of engagement, interest, achievement and ultimately progress.
- Success in Religious Education is celebrated through the school's reward system. This is well understood by pupils and they value it. Pupil work is displayed in Religious Education rooms celebrating excellence and progress.

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

- Leaders and managers ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in all key stages in curriculum terms, however only 8% of curriculum time is dedicated to years 7 and 8. This is currently under review.
- Religious Education has full parity with other subjects in terms of staffing, CPD, rooming and resources. It is considered a core subject and as such is held in high esteem by leaders and managers. The subject lead is a member of the extended leadership team.
- Additional requirements of the Bishop regarding the RE curriculum are embraced and fully implemented including, for example, the move to study of Judaism at key stage 4.
- The Religious Education department is extremely well led and ably supported by a strong team of dedicated teachers who are moving teaching and learning to a new, high level. The subject lead is inspiring his staff to a quality of teaching which is mostly outstanding and never less than good. This was a target from the previous inspection and has been achieved through his and the department's strategic action on teaching and learning.
- Thanks to strong leadership and positive attitudes relationships within the department are outstanding. Staff model the high standards and expectations of behaviour expected for all those in their care. The Religious Education department deserves the high reputation it has within the school community.
- Leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education is being well planned and is both thoughtful and imaginative. This is enabling pupils to, appropriately and over time, develop their knowledge, skills and understanding necessary to demonstrate religious literacy and ultimately perform well at the end of key stage 4 and in the sixth form. Evidence of this was observed in the classroom and in book scrutiny.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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- 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.

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

- The pupils at St Bede's act with quiet reverence during acts of Collective Worship. They are extremely well behaved and engage with community prayer with confidence. The weekly Mass was a joyful, reflective event with an uplifting contribution from members of the choir.
- Pupils often prepare and take a lead in Collective Worship. During the inspection a number of groups were preparing their own assembly for the following week. This included prayers they had written themselves, their own choice of music and a Powerpoint, prepared together with their teacher. It was apparent that much thought had been put into this planning.
- Almost all pupils spoken to were able to demonstrate an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts.
- A variety of approaches to prayer was evidenced in chaplaincy records, including use of scripture, religious artefacts and liturgical music. An excellent resource booklet is produced by the lay chaplain for use throughout the year and a highly organised calendar for events related to Collective Worship is available. It follows the themes from each Sunday Gospel and is linked to the liturgical season. Pupils value the resources made available to them and use them to enhance their prayer life. There are various voluntary opportunities for Collective Worship and these are often attended by pupils.
- The pupils feel they benefit from living and working in a faithful, praying community. It is clear that it is having an impact on many. One sixth form student explained how it helped shape his life. A connection to prayer is apparent. Pupils at St Bede's have limited first-hand knowledge in school of cultural diversity, however they do have a highly developed sense of respect for those of other faiths.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is good.

- Praying together is part of the daily experience for pupils and staff at St Bede's and it is carried out with a deep respect for those for whom it has great meaning. This is evidence of the positive relationships pupils have with each other and the adults with whom they work.

- Collective Worship has a clear purpose and message which is usually linked to the Gospel of the week. All groups in school are given the opportunity to lead prayer. For example each department in school is allocated a week during which they lead the morning prayer in staff briefing. Twice a week the Collective Worship focuses on year groups and this is led by leadership and management team, lay chaplain or progress leaders. The weekly Mass is led by a different tutor group each week and class liturgies occur throughout the working week.
- Themes for Collective Worship reflect the Church's liturgical year and reflect the knowledge and understanding the team has of the liturgical seasons, reflecting the Church's mission in Catholic schools. Resources to support the different stages are also available. Staff are encouraged to contribute to Collective Worship. An example of this is the contribution made by the MFL department and English and History departments who recorded poetry and literature extracts around WW1 to be used at Christmas.
- Collective Worship is extremely well planned for by the lay chaplain and her team of chaplaincy ambassadors. The lay chaplain is highly thought of and is a source of inspiration and ideas for staff and pupils.
- Teaching staff and the lay chaplain are highly skilled in supporting pupils when they plan and deliver Collective Worship, encouraging use of a variety of styles and methods of getting their ideas across. Collective Worship is planned in such a manner as to facilitate attendance by other adults associated with pupils at the school on some occasions throughout the school year, for example Confirmation Mass and St Bede's Mass. The response to this invitation is positive.

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

- Senior leaders and the lay chaplain have an excellent understanding of how to plan and deliver Collective Worship. They are deeply rooted in the Church's liturgical year and are passionate about ensuring that the pupils at St Bede's have high quality experiences of the Church's liturgical life. Close liaison with local clergy ensures that opportunities for receiving the sacraments are abundant.
- Senior leaders and the lay chaplain have expert knowledge in this field and are excellent role models of faithful living for pupils and staff. An outward facing school, all concerned regularly receive updates from the diocese and attend CPD to keep their own toolkit refreshed. The chaplaincy handbook is a document which supports staff in their role.
- The professional development of staff in liturgical formation and planning Collective Worship has a high priority. As a Catholic teaching school, senior leaders take their role of formal induction of teachers to a Catholic environment very seriously and plan accordingly.
- Leaders and governors are steadfast in their view that their self-evaluation continually energises the standards and efficacy of Collective Worship. They regularly review this at leadership and governor level.

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.

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

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

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**1**

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

1

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

1

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

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.

2

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

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SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Bede's Catholic School and Sixth Form College
Unique reference number	138172
Local authority	Durham
This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt Reverend Robert Byrne the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle 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	Mrs Julia Leech
Head teacher	Mr Neville Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	March 2015
Telephone number	01207 520424
Email address	stbedes@stbedes.durham.sch.uk