

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



## **Section 48 Inspection Report**

**St Mary's RC First School, Hexham**

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION  
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

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<b>School:</b>	St Mary's RC First School
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<b>School URN:</b>	122311
<b>Headteacher:</b>	Mrs Patricia Telfer
<b>Chair of Governors:</b>	Mr James Kavanagh
<b>Inspector:</b>	Mrs Denise Kendall
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	18 and 19 July 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 Mary's RC First School is a Voluntary Aided school in the Tyne Valley area. It has a wide catchment area and serves five separate parishes. The pupils enter the school with skills that are in line with those that are expected for their age. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals and those from minority ethnic groups is well below average. Although the number of pupils with special educational needs is below average the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is high. The school has the Activemark, Healthy School Status, Basic Skills and Gold No-Smoking awards. The school is popular and is highly regarded by the parishes and parents.

### **FACTUAL INFORMATION**

#### **Pupil Catchment:**

Number of pupils on roll: 127

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 69%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 31%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 0

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 0

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 5%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 9%

#### **Staffing**

Number of full time teachers: 4

Number of part time teachers: 2

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 67%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 65%

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

FS	10%	Yr 4	10%
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Yr 1	10%
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Yr 2	10%
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Yr 3	10%
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#### **Parishes served by the school:**

St Mary's Hexham, Corbridge and Swinburne

St Wilfrid's, Haltwhistle

St John of Beverley, Haydon Bridge

St Elizabeth's, Minsteracres

St Oswald's, Bellingham and Otterburn

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**How effective the school is in providing Catholic education**

1

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

2

### MAIN FINDINGS

St Mary's is an outstanding Catholic school. It is a very welcoming school with a caring and supportive ethos. The work of the school is clearly built upon the mission statement which can be seen in action within the school each day, providing the whole community with opportunities to journey in faith and pray together.

Pupils' work is consistently of a high quality and outcomes in Religious Education are good. Pupils enter the school with skills that are in line with those that are expected for their age. All pupils make at least expected progress throughout all key stages with some achieving at the highest level at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils show great interest in and speak confidently about the religious topics they study. Pupils' contribution to the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. Their response to the school's collective worship is outstanding. They act with reverence and are keen to participate fully through leading prayer and contributing their own reflections on a theme.

The school's provision for Religious Education is good due to the good teaching and the range of good quality resources and artefacts that are used to enhance the experiences offered to all pupils. A range of teaching strategies, including the use of art and drama, are used throughout the school. However, the more able pupils in particular would benefit from the provision of differentiated tasks which would enable them to achieve at the highest levels. Assessment and tracking procedures are well developed and are used effectively. The Religious Education curriculum meets the needs and interests of learners extremely well and the quality of collective worship provided by the school is outstanding.

Leadership and management of the school including monitoring and evaluation are outstanding. There is a clear vision which is shared by all. The governing body has an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and demonstrate their outstanding support through their active involvement in the life of the school. The school has developed excellent partnerships to promote Catholic learning and pupil well-being. The leadership team strives to ensure that all feeder parishes are fully involved in the life of the school. The promotion of community cohesion by leaders and managers is good, however, the school would benefit from raising further pupils' awareness of cultural diversity within the local and national areas. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good in all areas. The schools' own self-evaluation is accurate thus ensuring that strengths are celebrated and areas for improvement are identified and addressed.

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

- Improve teaching and learning by taking more opportunities to differentiate work by task as well as by outcome;
- Providing more opportunities for pupils to develop a greater awareness and understanding of cultural diversity both locally and nationally.

## PUPILS

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

1
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Outcomes for all pupils at St Mary's in Religious Education are good. Pupils from all year groups achieve well. They engage positively during Religious Education lessons and want to do their very best. They are able to talk confidently about their learning in Religious Education thus showing that their knowledge and skills are developing according to their age and ability. There are no notable differences between groups of learners and teaching assistants ensure that whenever necessary, pupils are supported in order to make progress according to their needs and capabilities. Pupils enter the school with skills that are in line with those that are expected for their age. Pupils' attainment is good. Assessment data indicates that the majority of pupils have achieved the expected level at the end of Key Stage 1. The more able pupils have the capacity to achieve higher standards but are not always given sufficient opportunity to be challenged further through the provision of differentiated tasks designed to help them achieve at the highest levels. Pupils are well prepared for the transfer to Middle School at the end of Year 4 and are well placed to reach the expected standard by the end of Key Stage 2. All pupils make good progress in Religious Education.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school and benefit very well from it. They are proud of their school and truly understand what it means to live by Gospel values and belong to a Catholic school. 'Statements to Live By' are well used within the school. Pupils are clear about how these contribute to helping them live in a good way and respect one another. Pupils have strong links with the parish community and are able to talk about key events and celebrations. They had a high regard for their parish priest who died recently and speak lovingly about the ways in which he helped them show love to others. Pupils appreciate their learning about other faiths and know that religion is important to many people whose beliefs are different from their own.

Pupils' response to and participation in collective worship is outstanding. They are reverent and respectful and sing enthusiastically during collective worship. They are able to pray silently and reflect on the message that is shared with them. They have a good understanding of religious seasons and festivals. They speak highly of the work they do in preparing for collective worship and are developing their skills in leading collective worship. Pupils in all classes contribute to collective worship through the use of scripture, prayer and hymns. Collective worship contributes positively to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils.

## PROVISION

2

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

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good and ensures that all pupils make good progress. Teachers in all Key Stages have high expectations. They ensure that a broad range of teaching styles are used including the use of drama and art and this together with quality resources result in good learning taking place. Teachers have good subject knowledge which is demonstrated in both the planning and teaching in all Key Stages. Differentiation by task is not sufficiently developed across the school and is identified as an emerging need within the school's action plan for improvement in order to challenge the more able pupils further.

Assessment is well developed and is an integral part of the planning process. Assessments are accurate and are moderated regularly within school as well as termly with the neighbouring middle school and annually as part of the diocesan process. This enables teachers to set some challenging targets for many pupils. Progress is tracked termly and this ensures that pupils at all levels are achieving at least expected levels, and the majority more than that. Effective marking contributes to the pupils' learning but as yet, not all pupils are aware of their next steps in learning.

The Religious Education curriculum provided fulfils all the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and meets the needs of pupils. The curriculum offered is planned imaginatively taking into account the learning styles and interests of the pupils. However, more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. The curriculum is enriched by a range of exciting artefacts and activities and provides many opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development helping them to prepare them for the next stage of their education. Through the Religious Education curriculum the pupils are given many opportunities to learn about religion and how they can use the knowledge and skills they have learnt and apply them in their everyday lives.

The quality of collective worship provided by the school is outstanding and ensures that the spiritual needs of all pupils are met. Prayer is central to the life of the school. The richness of this is clearly evident from the moment you enter the building. Many different opportunities are taken to ensure that pupils are able to participate in prayer in many different ways. Different styles of worship are offered and through this the pupils are being given the opportunity to lead prayer and worship within their classes. A variety of good liturgical opportunities provided by the school enable parents and the parish communities to join the pupils in worship and prayer.

## LEADERS AND MANAGERS

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

The school's leadership and management is outstanding. Leaders and managers are very effective in supporting and developing the Catholic life of the school. They promote Catholic values and principles well and the Catholic ethos underpins all aspects of the life of the school. The school mission statement is visible throughout the school and is clearly at the heart of school life. The deep commitment of the headteacher is an inspiration to the whole school community. The school leadership team, Religious Education co-ordinators and governors have a clear understanding of the school's role in the mission of the Church. Together they ensure that Catholic values are given high priority and that pupils experience a rich, broad and balanced curriculum. Self-evaluation reflects effective monitoring and analysis. This results in targeted planning and actions which ensures continuous improvement in all aspects of the Catholic life of the school.

The monitoring and evaluation of the provision for Religious Education is good. The leadership team and subject leader ensure that good assessment and tracking systems are in place and these have had a good impact on raising standards. There is some evidence of pupils being challenged to achieve at the highest level. However, pupils working at these higher levels are not always offered differentiated tasks in order to maximise their achievement levels.

The governors are fully involved in the Catholic life of the school and make an outstanding contribution to the work of the school. They carry out their duties efficiently, ensuring that they are both supportive and challenging. They are knowledgeable and well informed and know what needs to be done in order for the school to develop further. The governors have an excellent partnership with parents evidenced by their termly newsletter to them through which they provide an update of the governors' work in monitoring the work of the school.

There are excellent partnerships with parents, parish and the wider community resulting in a variety of activities which improve the school's provision. These activities also impact significantly on pupils' achievement and well-being and notably promote Catholic learning. The school has worked extremely hard to ensure that all the parishes served by the school are enabled to participate fully in the life of the school. Excellent communication systems are in place to ensure that the parish communities are kept informed about the activities of the school.

Leaders and managers' promotion of community cohesion is good. The school is an inclusive community with a clear, shared vision and a strong sense of belonging. Leaders respect difference, value diversity and ensure equal opportunities for all. Many opportunities exist for pupils to engage and collaborate with each other through the school pastoral system. The school takes part in a range of fundraising activities supporting St Cuthbert's Care and CAFOD and this enables pupils to develop an understanding of working for the common good. There are limited opportunities to enable pupils to develop a greater understanding of cultural



diversity in the UK and this has clearly been identified as an area for development within the school's action plan for improvement.

## SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>1</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>1</b>
• how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	<b>2</b>
❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress	<b>2</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>2</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>1</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>2</b>
• the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education	<b>2</b>
• the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	<b>1</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>1</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>1</b>
• how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils	<b>1</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>1</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>