



St Columba's RC Primary School

Station Road, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear, NE28 8EN

School Unique Reference Number: **108625**

Inspection dates: 02 – 03 May 2019

Lead inspector: John Hattam

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Religious Education:		Good	2
Collective Worship:		Outstanding	1

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Columba's RC Primary School is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- Catholic Life at St Columba's is outstanding. The headteacher, senior leadership team, all staff and governors have high expectations and share a vision with regard to the Catholic mission of the school.
- Religious Education is good. Teachers have a clear understanding of the value of Religious Education which they communicate effectively. Leaders have clear plans for further improvements.
- Collective Worship is outstanding. High quality Collective Worship is central to the life of the school; it binds the whole school community together. Parents describe the impact of Collective Worship on their children as 'profound'.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- The school is similar in size to most schools nationally with 209 pupils on roll.
- 76% of the pupils on roll are baptised Catholic, with a further 12% from other Christian denominations.
- 11% of the pupils on roll are recorded as having special educational needs or a disability.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for 20% of the pupils on roll.
- 3% of the pupils on roll are recorded as having English as an additional language.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- To improve the quality of Religious Education by:
 - supporting and developing the whole teaching staff, so that they continue to develop creative learning sequences that inspire, engage and enthuse all learners.
- To improve the quality of Collective Worship by:
 - creating more opportunities for parents and carers to engage in acts of worship.
- To improve the quality of Catholic Life by:
 - continuing to develop and strengthen the links with the wider community of St Columba's.

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.

- The extent to which all pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding and is at the heart of everything the school does.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and recognise that it is a very special place to learn. During the inspection they said, 'At St Columba's we are all part of one big, happy family but we learn that we are also all part of God's family. It makes us feel special and loved.'
- Pupils enjoy and respond positively to the many opportunities the school offers them to engage in leadership of the Catholic Life of the school. The Mini Vinnies, school councillors and the mini police are outstanding role models for younger children across school.
- Older pupils work with their nearest neighbours 'Eothen Care Home' which looks after people suffering with dementia. The residents are invited to attend nativity plays and Sports Day in school and pupils work alongside residents in the home once a month.
- Pupils are overwhelmingly supportive of the many charities that the school supports including collections for the local charity 'Walking With', The Shoebox Appeal and the Shining Stars Appeal. Pupils described the feeling they had helping others as being, 'a warm feeling', knowing they were helping someone.
- Pupils benefit from the pursuit of social justice which is well supported by the school. They are keen to challenge inequality in school and make positive, personal choices, which lead to improvements in the lives of people, locally, nationally and globally.

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

- The school mission, 'Learning, loving and respecting with God in our hearts' is central to life at St Columba's. It touches all those who form part of the school community; parents, staff, parish and diocese.
- Staff have worked hard to ensure that the mission statement, which has been revised since the last inspection, is at the heart of all areas of school life.
- St Columba's is a prayer filled community with a very strong sense of family which can be seen in the quality of relationships between all members of staff and pupils.

- Dedicated staff offer their skills and talents to support the Catholic Life of the school beyond the curriculum by running after school clubs, school fairs, parish events, First Holy Communion and the Erasmus Project.
- Great care is taken to celebrate the many successes that both staff and pupils enjoy. High quality displays give all visitors to the school a sense of the depth of commitment in this school community to the work of the Catholic church in education.
- The school environment reflects its mission and identity through concrete and effective signs of the school's Catholic character.
- Clear policies and procedures are in place in the school to ensure that all members of the school community are treated justly. There is a clear commitment to ensure that the most vulnerable and needy are supported appropriately and that uneven distribution of wealth or resources is not a barrier to any child experiencing the fullest range of experiences on offer at St Columba's.
- Pastoral programmes including Relationships and Sex Education are carefully planned, consistently well taught and celebrate Catholic teachings and principles.

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

- As a direct result of the inspiration provided by the headteacher, the school's wider leadership team is deeply committed to the church's mission in education. The authentic Catholic ethos and feeling of 'family' is nurtured and sustained by leaders at all levels in school.
- The headteacher, who has taken up her post since the last denominational inspection, and the newly appointed deputy headteacher are exemplary role models and are highly successful in motivating staff and pupils to be the best they can be.
- All leaders in school, including the recently appointed Religious Education coordinator, have high expectations for the promotion and continuing development of the Catholic Life of the school. The Religious Education coordinator ensures that continuing professional development focused on the Catholic Life of the school is frequent, well planned, engaging and effective.
- The school's self-evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school is given the highest priority by leaders and is an accurate analysis and reflection of planned monitoring and self-challenge.
- The school is well supported by the work of the parish priest who is a regular visitor to school. He is a visible presence in the school community which makes him ideally placed to both challenge and support pupils, staff and parents.
- Leaders recognise that a great deal of work has been done to promote the Catholic Life of the school with parents, carers and the wider community but that there is still work to be done in this important area and clear plans are in place to address this.
- The governing body is a real strength at St Columba's. The governing body provide very effective challenge and support for the Catholic Life of the school. They are passionate about the community and are actively involved in delivering the school's mission and evaluating the impact of the senior leadership team.

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.

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

- Almost all pupils recognise the importance of Religious Education and are enthusiastic in lessons.
- Most pupils are religiously literate, and many are very articulate and thoughtful in their oral responses. During the inspection pupils said they enjoyed talking about their learning in Religious Education and were very proud of their many achievements.
- Behaviour in all lessons observed during the inspection was outstanding, with pupils across the school displaying positive attitudes towards lessons, learning and each other.
- Most pupils make good progress over time across a range of skills and are developing well in terms of knowledge and understanding. Pupils' ability to interpret sources and symbols, the ability to reflect and evaluate and the ability to engage with religious ideas is strongest where learning sequences are developed creatively and do not rely simply on the content of the 'Come and See' programme.
- Pupils make good progress across both key stages including those pupils with special education needs or disabilities. Pupils said, 'We really like our teachers and we know that they care for us and want us to succeed.'
- Outcomes for pupils are good overall but there have been some inconsistencies over time. Well targeted interventions from skilled support staff have helped pupils to secure very positive outcomes.

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

- The quality of teaching across school is mostly good, although there were some examples of outstanding teaching observed during the inspection. In the best lessons pupils are set age-appropriate, challenging tasks which are well matched to their learning needs and which successfully engage all pupils.
- Relationships between staff and pupils is a real strength at St Columba's. Pupils in upper key stage 2 said that their teacher, 'Challenges them every single day to try their best.'
- Support staff are used effectively to reinforce learning and to support and extend pupils of different abilities.
- The use of assessment to monitor progress and identify any gaps in understanding is well established. The Religious Education coordinator has developed a rigorous tracking system

which clearly illustrates where the strengths and areas for development are across the school.

- Teachers are skilled at checking pupil's understanding during lessons. They use their subject knowledge to good effect to impact on the quality of learning.
- Feedback in books and that observed during the inspection was good. Teachers were able to give pupils the help they needed at the time they needed it. Pupils said that they understood what level they were working at in Religious Education and that teachers always helped them to improve their work.

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

- The monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education is rigorous and robust, and it enables school leaders to plan effectively to deliver the best outcomes for all pupils. Detailed analysis carried out by the headteacher and the Religious Education coordinator clearly identifies strengths and the key areas for improvement. These areas for improvement are detailed in the school improvement plan which is shared regularly with governors.
- Leaders are relentless in their desire to improve teaching and learning in Religious Education across the school. As a result, teaching is at least good and in some cases outstanding.
- Leaders in the school have a clear and inspiring vision for Religious Education which is clearly communicated to all staff, pupils, parents and the wider community. Parents commented on how much they appreciated the 'open door' policy that the headteacher has introduced which allows them greater access to the school and a deeper understanding of how well their children are achieving in Religious Education. Parents also said how much they appreciated the valuable information shared via the school website and the school newsletter the 'Iona Star'.
- Sacramental preparation is a real strength at St Columba's. Governors said how they valued the opportunity to see the skills and knowledge that the pupils had acquired during the programme come to fruition in a school/parish celebration which, 'binds the two communities together in a special way.'
- The governing body at St Columba's has a wealth of talent and experience to draw upon. They are regular visitors to school and are deeply involved in the life of the school and as a result are well placed to promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.
- The governors are able to offer a high level of challenge to the leadership team as well as invaluable support.

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.

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

- St Columba's offers pupils the opportunity to enjoy and participate in a prayer filled community where worship is regular, meaningful and inspirational. Pupils across school, from the very youngest to those in key stage two, are inspired by and enthusiastic in their response to Collective Worship. Pupils are very keen to participate in liturgies, they gather respectfully, sing joyfully and reflect prayerfully.
- Pupils are very confident in planning, preparing and leading liturgies both in class for their peers or in larger groups throughout the school. They are confident in the choosing and using of resources and have a wide variety of prayer and liturgical styles which they employ effectively to engage their peers.
- Pupils in early years and key stage one are able to recognise and show respect for liturgical symbols. They say communal prayers with confidence and reflect in silence. Older pupils understand the importance of religious belief and are able to show respect for their own faith and the faith of others.
- During the inspection pupils said that they are now 'very confident' leading Collective Worship because they have excellent adult role models who have shown them how to plan, prepare and lead acts of Collective Worship. Pupils also said, 'We would like our parents to pray with us more often, maybe attending class worship, so they can see what we have done'. Pupils at St Columba's are very proud of the acts of worship that they have prepared and led.
- Almost all pupils have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Prayer and acts of Collective Worship are given the highest priority at St Columba's and are a key part of every day and every school celebration; they provide inspiration for staff and pupils.
- There is a clear policy for Collective Worship and a good range of structures to ensure that it is frequent, regular and inclusive. There are many opportunities for the pupils and staff to pray together during the school day and across the school year.

- Collective Worship has a clear purpose, message and direction. The themes chosen by staff reflect a deep understanding of the liturgical season and the Church's mission in education. Staff are passionate about ensuring that pupils have positive, high quality experiences of Collective Worship.
- Traditions such as the rosary have a very high profile in school. During May pupils from across the school pray the rosary, led by a member of staff. The prayerful atmosphere created in the heart of the school in the middle of a busy lunch break was very powerful.
- Staff in school work hard to prepare pupils to take part in the sacramental programmes for Reconciliation and Communion. The programmes are well supported by the parish priest and the parishioners who enjoy welcoming the pupils to mass at weekends where they take an active part in celebrations.
- Since the last inspection opportunities are now planned in a manner that attracts and facilitates attendance by other adults associated with the pupils. The school recognises that while this has improved it is still an area for improvement.

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

- The headteacher sets very high standards for Collective Worship in school. She leads by example, preparing and leading Collective Worship which is not only age appropriate but inspirational. The headteacher skilfully interprets scripture making it accessible to pupils in a contemporary context.
- Through her leadership the headteacher develops in staff and pupils a deepening appreciation of the Church's traditions, seasons, rites and symbols.
- The headteacher has ensured that the spiritual development of pupils is at the very heart of St Columba's and that significant time is devoted to this.
- The Religious Education coordinator and the headteacher work closely together to monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship at St Columba's. Their analysis of the quality of provision is detailed; it is shared with other staff and governors which in turn leads to further improvements.
- The Religious Education coordinator has a very visible presence in the school. She works hard to support all members of staff. Her plans for improvement and knowledge of the school community make her ideally placed to evaluate the impact of Collective Worship in school.
- Leaders regularly seek the views of staff, parents and other stakeholders in the school in order to plan for future developments.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school and have a clear understanding of the school's many strengths. They are well placed to challenge and support the school leadership team as they strive for further improvements in the provision of Collective Worship at St Columba's.

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

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**2**

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

2

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

2

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.

1

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

1

SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Columba's RC Primary School
Unique reference number	108625
Local authority	North Tyneside
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	Paul Dinsley
Head teacher	Claire Garbutt
Date of previous school inspection	January 2014
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