

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



**S48 Inspection Report
St Cuthbert's RC First School
Berwick Northumberland**

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

School:	St Cuthbert's RC First School
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School URN:	122309
Headteacher:	Mrs Bernie Fisher
Chair of Governors:	Mr Robin Chapman
Inspector:	Mrs Carole Snee
Date of Inspection:	16 and 17 January 2012

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 Cuthbert's is a very small first school serving the parish of Our Lady and St Cuthbert, Berwick upon Tweed. It is the only Catholic school in Berwick. Just over 17% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, while 20% of the pupils have been identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. About half of the pupils are from Catholic families; the remainder are mainly Christian with a small number of Muslim pupils. The school also welcomes a number of traveller pupils. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups has increased from 7.8% in 2007 to 26.6% in 2011. As the nearest Catholic middle school is in Alnwick, virtually all pupils transfer to non-Catholic middle schools at the end of year four.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll: 68

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 53%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 29.4%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 4.4%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 13.2%

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 22%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 20.5%

Staffing

Number of full time teachers: 2

Number of part time teachers: 1

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 64.2%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 35.7%

Percentage of learning time given to Religious Education:

FS 10

Yr 1 10

Yr 2 10

Yr 3 10

Yr 4 10

Parishes served by the school:

Our Lady and St Cuthbert, Berwick upon Tweed.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic education

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

MAIN FINDINGS

St Cuthbert's is a satisfactory school. It has some key strengths including a very caring atmosphere and ethos. Staff work hard together as a team to ensure that their pupils have the best possible care. Pupils are tremendously supportive of each other, collaborate very well and speak warmly of their school - "our school is the best!" From an early age, they learn about the importance of treating each other with respect and have a good understanding of right and wrong. The school has good relationships with parents and is held in high regard by the parish.

They engage well in lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. Overall, outcomes for pupils are satisfactory. From largely average starting points, pupils progress steadily in Religious Education and are currently on track to achieve standards that are broadly average. They benefit greatly from the range of opportunities offered to contribute to the Catholic life of the school. Pupil participation in prayer and the liturgical life of the school has some good elements with pupils increasingly taking a more active part in worship as they move through the school. Pupils respond to worship with reverence and respect. The promotion of spiritual and moral development is good.

The provision for Catholic education is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory as the lack of rigorous assessments informing planning has slowed the rate of progress and achievement. Tracking systems are in place but assessment is not yet secure and information is not being used consistently to effectively challenge higher attainers. Furthermore, marking is not used to ensure pupils know exactly what they have to do to improve their work. The quality of collective worship offered to the pupils is satisfactory overall. It is well embedded within the school day and there is a variety of opportunities for worship.

Leadership and management is satisfactory overall. The Catholic life of the school is monitored informally and the school recognises the need to formalise this. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and based on a range of information, although there are times when it is not rigorous enough to inform robust judgements. Systems are in place to track pupil progress and monitor and evaluate learning and teaching but the unavoidable absence of the RE co-ordinator has been a barrier to progress. The governing body are very supportive and committed to the school, and are beginning to develop their ability to challenge the school constructively. The school has established a good range of partnerships to promote Catholic learning and well-being, and community cohesion is effectively promoted. The headteacher has a strong sense of purpose and a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be done to improve further. The RE co-ordinator is totally committed to raising standards and has a sharp focus on learning and teaching. As there has been slow progress in the key issues of the last inspection, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Raise standards , particularly by the end of year four, by:
 - using rigorous assessment to set clear and appropriately challenging targets for achievement and progress for each pupil;
 - monitoring progress of individual pupils and groups on a regular basis, and identifying and addressing any underachievement swiftly;
 - ensuring all staff consistently use a wide range of teaching strategies to engage pupils in their learning, and are using marking to identify clearly how pupils can improve their work.

- Involve pupils more effectively in collective worship by:
 - planning a clear progressive programme to develop their ability to lead a variety of opportunities for prayer;
 - extending the range and format of opportunities for collective worship to meet the differing needs of the pupils.

PUPILS

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

3

The large majority of pupils have a very positive attitude towards their learning. They enjoy their work and show interest, enthusiasm and engagement because of the imaginative lessons their teachers plan for them. Pupils' oral responses indicate that knowledge, skills and understanding are developing according to their age and experience. A few pupils show extremely mature understanding when talking about their learning. Achievement in Religious Education is satisfactory overall. From average starting points, pupils progress steadily throughout the Foundation Stage and recent data indicates satisfactory progress across key stage one (KS1) and lower key stage two (KS2). Inspection findings indicate little variation in progress between boys and girls. Pupils with special and/or educational needs are very well supported and make steady progress in line with all pupils. The more able pupils, however, are not being consistently challenged and are not achieving in line with their capabilities. Current attainment is average overall. By the end of KS1 most pupils are attaining level two which is average, but pupils do not exceed these levels. By the end of year four, the large majority attain level three, but again no one exceeds these levels. Standards have remained largely stable over the last three years.

Pupils make a good contribution to the Catholic life of the school and benefit greatly from it. This manifests itself, for example, in the way the school council exercises its role responsibly, in the way that new pupils are welcomed into the school and fundraising for CAFOD or other charities. Pupils can talk about the values behind why they fund raise for various charities and also empathise with the feelings of pupils new to the school. They express their views and feelings clearly, and take an interest in the religious life of others. They understand the importance of key celebrations in school and in the parish community throughout the liturgical year. The pupils are especially proud of the work they had done on the Stations of the Cross. Pupils show positive relationships and demonstrate a good understanding of right and wrong. They have a developing sense of understanding of other beliefs, other cultures and community organisations.

Pupils' response to and participation in collective worship is satisfactory overall. This has recently been a focus area of development and improvement in the life of the school. They participate willingly in services and their responses show both respect and reverence. They speak of feeling calm, happy and safe after times of prayer and are happy to write about their prayer experiences independently in their prayer journals. They are not yet sufficiently skilled in planning, preparing and leading worship independently. Collective worship has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils.

PROVISION

How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education

3

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is satisfactory overall. Lessons are carefully planned but teachers do not consistently use assessment to plan differentiated activities that appropriately challenge all pupils, especially the more able. Teachers demonstrate sound subject knowledge and use a range of teaching strategies to engage pupils in their learning and help develop their independence as learners. Questioning sometimes extends a child's learning but is not used consistently enough to really probe pupils' understanding and challenge them effectively. Good use is made of relevant computer programmes to support pupils' learning. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed. Teachers are beginning to develop systems to ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. These are not yet embedded consistently across the school.

Assessment and academic guidance is satisfactory. The school has a broad overview of pupils' progress and attainment in Religious Education. The school is beginning to use a systematic programme where the attainment of all pupils is tracked regularly. As yet, however, this information is not used consistently enough to inform planning of suitably challenging lessons. While pupil targets are evident in pupils' books, teachers do not use this information consistently to set tasks which allow pupils to demonstrate achievement at higher levels. Also at present, marking is not developed enough to enable pupils to understand their next steps in learning. The school recognises the need to embed these systems more rigorously, to analyse the results and to monitor progress towards targets in order to ensure a positive impact on pupils' learning, progress and standards.

The Religious Education curriculum is satisfactory at meeting the needs of pupils and it fulfils the requirements of the Bishops' Conference well. Learning builds upon pupils' prior experiences and is increasingly enriched by drama, ICT and a range of resources. On the whole, the curriculum offered takes into account the variety of learning styles, age and interests of the pupils, as a result of which the vast majority of pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm. The more able, however, are not provided with more challenging activities. Pupils express their views confidently. They are provided with a good range of opportunities to enrich their spiritual and moral development.

The quality of collective worship provided by the school is satisfactory overall, with some good elements. Prayer is central to the life of the school and there is a variety of prayer and liturgy opportunities on offer. Pupils are particularly proud of their prayer journals and the opportunity to contribute to the school's Book of Remembrance. While most acts of worship follow a fairly routine structure where teachers are leading the prayer, the school has recognised this and is working with the pupils on plans for a Spiritual Garden. Adults and pupils pray comfortably together, worship is inclusive and reflective and pupils take an active part in both large and small groupings. Parents and carers are regularly invited to acts of worship such as the very successful Christingle service held in the church, and the Travelling Crib ensured all families were included in the celebration for Christmas. Many opportunities are offered for pupils to actively participate in acts of collective worship but there are fewer opportunities for them to be involved in planning and preparing worship.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

2

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

Leaders and managers are good at promoting Catholic values and principles. Although progress on the further development of the Catholic life of the school slowed during the absence of the RE coordinator. The school has a clear understanding of their role in the mission of the Church. Continuing professional development effectively develops staff understanding and commitment as a result of which the strong promotion of Catholic values is clearly articulated to the whole school community. This enables a high level of pupil involvement and participation in the Catholic life of the school. A range of informal opportunities is taken to monitor the Catholic life of the school enabling areas of development to be identified and addressed.

The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in Religious Education is satisfactory. Assessment and tracking systems are in place as are procedures for monitoring pupil outcomes and lesson observations. In such a small school, individual pupils are known very well, and the school is just beginning to analyse the progress of different groups. The headteacher is fully committed to driving improvement. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and informs appropriate improvement planning. Some aspects of school life are not evaluated rigorously enough to inform robust improvement plans. There is some evidence that recently improved systems are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress, though instability in staffing has made implementation difficult. The extremely conscientious co-ordinator works closely with all staff and has a clear view of how to secure improvement.

The work of governors is satisfactory and improving. The governing body is very supportive of the school, committed to its Catholic life and well informed in this area. They are beginning to be more informed about the school's performance in curriculum Religious Education and what needs to be done to ensure continuous improvement in standards. They discharge their statutory and canonical duties well and have a good understanding of the challenges faced by the school. They engage well with parents and respond appropriately to their views and concerns.

Leaders and managers effectively develop partnerships with other providers and organisations. A range of partnership activities with, for example, CAFOD, St Cuthbert's Care and Operation Christmas Child make a good contribution to pupils' well-being and to the Catholic life of the school. Leaders and managers also ensure that links are well established with other primary schools and high schools through activities such as the Sports Partnership and annual Pupil Voice conference. The headteacher has also forged strong links with other Catholic headteachers; this has enabled the school to contribute to and share in the good practice of a wide range of other schools. The school has made considerable strides recently in overcoming the difficulties caused by the distance between the church building and the school and links with the parish are becoming steadily stronger

The way in which leaders and managers promote community cohesion is good and effective. There is a shared common purpose and sense of belonging within the school community. Inclusion is at the heart of school life and promoted successfully. Many opportunities exist for groups and individuals within the school to engage and collaborate with each other. Strengthening partnerships with parents, parish and the wider community serve community cohesion well by developing pupils' commitment to the common good and strengthening their awareness of moral and global issues. The school is particularly effective in its support for the travelling community and has made a proactive approach to ethnic minority parents through

maths workshops and the toddler group. The Religious Education curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn about other faiths and traditions and to respect differences. It promotes attitudes of respect and tolerance for all faiths. Acts of collective worship are inclusive and the spiritual identity of all individuals is respected.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

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

Overall effectiveness	3
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	3
How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship 	3
How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of collective worship provided by the school 	3
How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well-being 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion. 	2