



Our Lady Star of the Sea RCVA Primary

Thorpe Road, Horden, Peterlee, SR8 4AB

School Unique Reference Number: **114281**

Inspection dates:	10 – 11 October 2019
Lead inspector:	Mr Martin Humble

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

Our Lady Star of the Sea RCVA Primary is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- The quality of Religious Education is good. Overall, good teaching and subject knowledge ensure that pupils make good progress over time. Pupils enjoy their learning and concentrate very well. Behaviour is exemplary.
- Our Lady Star of the Sea is a very warm, welcoming and vibrant school where everyone shares the executive headteacher's clear vision. The mission and ethos of Catholic education is at the heart of this faith community
- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding because the spiritual and personal development of pupils and staff underpins all that the school does. Pupils are actively involved in a range of activities which support the local and global community, contributing significantly to their moral, social and emotional development.
- The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding. Worship is central to the life of the school. Pupils, guided by skilled staff, demonstrate the skills necessary to deliver high quality acts of worship.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- Our Lady Star of the Sea RCVA Primary School is a smaller than average primary school serving the parishes of Our Lady Star of the Sea, Horden and St Mary's, Easington Colliery.
- The headteacher is an executive headteacher with another neighbouring Catholic primary school dividing her time equally between the two schools.
- There are four mixed age classes in the school – reception/year one, year two/year three, year three/year four, year five/year six.
- A minority of pupils (23.5%) are baptised Catholics.
- The pupil population comes mainly from the two ex-mining villages of Horden and Easington where there are high levels of unemployment.
- Our Lady Star of the Sea's deprivation indicator of 54% is in the highest 10% of schools nationally where the national average is 22.5% (January 2019).
- Almost all pupils are white British.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education by:
 - providing challenge for all pupils, but particularly for the more able.
 - developing manageable assessment and attainment tracking procedures.
- Improve how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education by:
 - enabling leaders to evaluate the impact of the new assessment systems on both teaching and learning
- Improve how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education by:
 - ensuring a consistent approach to support pupil self-evaluation of their progress.

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.

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

- Pupils have a deep sense of belonging to their school family and parents comment that, 'Our Lady Star of the Sea is a very safe, warm and welcoming environment for all families'. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic Life of the school and benefit greatly from it.
- The mission statement is viewed by all as a living document. The Catholic ethos is tangible throughout the school. Pupils fully appreciate, value and participate in the Catholic Life of the school with the new mission statement central to the daily routines.
- Pupils regularly evaluate their input into the Catholic Life of the school and the impact of their actions on their community. Pupils say they feel very valued and confidently express their ideas and feelings. They understand what it means to be unique and accepting of all.
- Pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of the importance of how they live their lives and how they treat others. Pupils are happy, confident and secure in their own stage of spiritual growth, demonstrating exemplary behaviour towards adults and each another.
- Through good parish links, pupils have the opportunity to worship with parishioners when Mass is celebrated in school. Pupils are at the heart of school celebrations.
- Opportunities are plentiful for pupils to extend their relationship with the local and global community particularly through their fundraising and charitable actions. Pupils have organised a wide variety of fundraising activities and collections with the proceeds supporting the Mercy Ships UK during Lent. Support has also been given to the local food bank, MacMillan Cancer Support, Poppy Appeal, Clic Sargent and CAFOD.
- Positions of responsibility and leadership within the school, such as school council and Mini Vinnies, are willingly and eagerly taken on by pupils.
- Pupils confidently talk about the various causes they support, effectively promoting the Catholic character of the school with older pupils working hard to achieve their Faith in Action Pin Award.

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

- The Catholic values of the school are given the highest priority and are embedded in the daily life of Our Lady Star of the Sea. The mission statement is a vital part of school life which all members of the community have played a part in shaping. This living statement has recently been reviewed and revised to ensure it represents the current school community.
- Excellent relationships exist within the school community with all stakeholders fully committed to making the school the best that it can be. Staff, governors, parents and pupils are all encouraged to be involved in school life. Parents indicate that regular, detailed communication is a strength of the school.
- The school is a prayerful community where all members of the community feel welcomed. Parents comment that, 'Our Lady Star of the Sea offers a very warm welcome to all, and is very supportive and understanding of family issues'. There is a strong sense of family and parents take advantage of the opportunities to worship and pray with their children particularly through the Wednesday Word home/school book.
- Our Lady Star of the Sea is a school committed to Catholic tradition and ethos. The Catholic character of the school is evident in the creative displays and sacred spaces prominently featured around the school. The school worship area is well used by staff and pupils to support their spiritual growth and connect with God through prayer and quiet time.
- Clear policies and procedures are in place which are carefully planned to reflect the Catholic Life of the school for both pupils and staff. They provide high levels of support for pupils, staff and families in the wider community.
- Pupils are clearly supported throughout school by a range of pastoral opportunities provided by the parish priest and caring adults. All staff play their part and everyone is valued for their contribution.
- There is an explicit commitment to the most vulnerable and needy in the local and global community with regular fundraising and collections.
- Parents truly value their inclusion in a loving family orientated school.
- The relationships and sex education programme is well established and delivered effectively at age appropriate levels following the Diocesan model.

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

- Leaders and managers throughout the school are instrumental in ensuring that the Church's mission in education is lived and breathed by all connected with the school. They have a very clear understanding of the vision of Catholic education and the role of the Catholic school in the mission of the Church.
- Governors are active within the school community and fully participate in the Catholic Life of the school.
- Leaders are highly ambitious for all children. The executive headteacher, Religious Education coordinator and parish priest are excellent role models and are motivated and enthusiastic about the journey that the school is on.
- The school has developed very successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers, who have a clear understanding of the school's mission.
- The Catholic Life of the school is monitored by all stakeholders on a regular basis to

inform priorities and evaluate success. Governors are confident in holding the leadership team to account, whilst being actively involved in supporting its mission. They have an excellent grasp of the many challenges faced by the school and work very effectively with the executive headteacher.

- The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. It has clear links to the school improvement plan and is focused on improvements for pupil outcomes.
- The spirituality of staff is a priority and opportunities for the spiritual development of all staff are provided through regular prayer opportunities.

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.

- Pupils enjoy and understand the value of Religious Education, demonstrating enthusiasm and commitment in their learning. Behaviour in lessons is very good with pupils concentrating well and displaying positive attitudes to their learning.
- The expectations of teachers ensure pupils make good progress across a range of skills and are developing well in their knowledge and understanding. They demonstrate good prior knowledge and are able to use this well in their new learning.
- Outcomes for pupils are good overall. From below average starting points, pupils in early years foundation stage (EYFS) make good progress and this continues through key stage 1. Good progress continues throughout key stage 2 and books evidence a good standard of work which is consistently in line with the Diocesan average by the end of key stage 2.
- Inspection findings and evidence presented by the school shows no notable differences between groups of learners. Pupils identified as having special educational needs make good progress because of the quality of targeted support from skilled staff.
- Pupils speak about their lessons being very interesting and providing them with opportunities to learn about God and how he wants us to live our lives.
- Pupils understand where they are in their learning journey but don't always know what they need to do to improve. Where targets are explicit, pupils are keen to achieve but this is not always consistent throughout school. Learning objectives and success criteria need to be explicit for all pupils to evaluate their own progress; this is not consistent across school.
- Pupils have pride in their work which is evidenced in well-presented books. There is some thoughtful dialogue with teachers ensuring interest and wonder is maintained, but this needs to be more consistent across the school.

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

- Teaching is good with some examples of outstanding teaching. In most lessons pupils are set tasks which are matched to their learning needs and which engage most pupils. However, teachers need to consistently provide further elements of challenge, particularly for the more able pupils, when setting tasks. Teachers demonstrate high expectations of behaviour and engagement and, as a result, pupils

concentrate well.

- In lessons, tasks are well matched to the learning objective to promote good learning. Activities are consistently matched to pupils' abilities to engage all groups of learners and to enable them to work independently.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and are a real strength of the school. Support staff are skilled and very enthusiastic and they are used very effectively to reinforce learning and to support and extend pupils of different abilities.
- Assessments are regular and the school is trialling a tracking system to provide information on pupil attainment. This will need to be reviewed and evaluated as to its effectiveness and how this detailed recording is impacting on teacher workload.
- The assessment of pupils' work is accurate as teachers become more confident with the use of age related expectations in Religious Education. The school is in a good position to move forward with the Age-Related Standards (3-19) in Religious Education.
- Teachers use Diocesan plans and guidance to deliver well planned activities through a range of teaching strategies, which help pupils to develop and extend their knowledge and foster curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.
- Teachers make good use of time to maximise learning and develop a range of skills, interpreting signs and symbols, asking significant questions and engaging with religious ideas.
- Resources are used effectively to optimise learning for each pupil. The school use visits, such as to the Emmaus Village, to support the learning of all pupils in a variety of settings during their programmes of study.
- Regular moderation of work takes place in school and within the local cluster of schools, ensuring judgements on pupil attainment are accurate.

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

- The executive headteacher demonstrates and shares the vision for the school and for what every pupil and teacher can achieve. Parents commented that she consistently inspires and supports the whole school community with her enthusiastic and engaging approach.
- Leaders use a range of monitoring activities to regularly check on the quality of teaching and, as a result, have a very accurate picture of the strengths and areas for development. Clear steps for development are detailed in the school improvement plan.
- The adoption this year of the new Age-Related Standards (3-19) in Religious Education means leaders will need to focus more closely in their monitoring of teacher assessments to ensure all teachers are accurate and consistent in their judgements on pupil progress and attainment.
- The commitment and leadership of the executive headteacher, who is both knowledgeable and efficient, have had a significant impact on ensuring standards are maintained in line with Diocesan averages. Consequently, teaching and learning is at a good level enabling all pupils to make good progress.
- All aspects of Religious Education are evaluated regularly and all staff are kept well informed about the priorities in Religious Education. Leaders and managers use their findings very effectively to promote improvement.
- The Religious Education curriculum is rich and varied, providing a range of activities

and imaginative teaching to foster engagement and enable all pupils to make at least expected progress in their learning. The Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.

- Sacramental preparation, due to small numbers of children, is delivered every two years and in accordance with Diocesan policy.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school and are routinely involved in a range of monitoring and evaluation activities. They are very supportive but also confident in their ability to challenge. They discharge their statutory and canonical duties well.

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.

- Our Lady Star of the Sea is a prayerful community. There is a calm and peaceful ethos which pervades the school and is reflected in the pupils' excellent behaviour and consideration for each other. They take opportunities to reflect and pray in their worship areas and the recently created Hobbit House takes prayer and worship out of the school building into their forest environment. Pupils' involvement in Collective Worship is a central part of their school experience.
- From the earliest age pupils act reverently when participating in acts of worship. Pupils are confident in planning and carrying out Collective Worship using a variety of styles and resources reflecting the liturgical year. They are able to talk knowledgeably about the variety of prayers and liturgies that take place.
- Pupils participate in voluntary prayer sessions utilising the dedicated worship area in school.
- Pupils recognise the special nature of liturgical symbols and show respect. They are aware that religious beliefs are important, demonstrating respect for their own faith and the faith of others.
- Adults provide excellent role models for pupils in their response and participation in liturgy and this is evident when pupils lead their own liturgies. The support of the parish priest is very effective in maintaining high quality worship opportunities across school.
- Pupils confirm that the worship sessions are times they appreciate as it helps them reflect in a calm and quiet time.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- There is a clear policy for Collective Worship, it is carefully planned and resourced and is central to everyday life at Our Lady Star of the Sea.
- There is a rich variety of different forms of worship evident throughout the school. In all areas of the school there are references to prayer and there is a designated space in class and in school for pupils to gather together for worship and personal prayer.
- The forest garden area is used to provide opportunities for a variety of spiritual experiences led by staff and pupils.

- There is a comprehensive timetable for Collective Worship. Parents, parishioners and governors are invited to share in various acts of Collective Worship and they regularly attend Masses, liturgies and other timetabled acts of worship.
- The school enhances worship opportunities by providing opportunities to use different locations as a focus for spiritual development such as home with the travelling crib and the travelling rosary and visits to the Emmaus Village.
- The use of contemporary music and liturgical dance further enhances provision and has a positive impact upon pupil enjoyment and participation.

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

- The executive headteacher has set a very high standard for Collective Worship in school. She leads by example, drawing on personal experiences, to ensure that pupils and staff develop a deepening appreciation of the Church's traditions, seasons, rites and symbols and that prayerful, reflective opportunities contribute to the spiritual formation of pupils and staff.
- The governors have invested time and resources to support spiritual development across school. The school's parish priest is highly respected throughout the school and effectively leads and supports worship development.
- Leaders regularly review Collective Worship throughout the school. They seek the views of pupils and parents through the use of questionnaires and feedback after school events. Pupil, staff and parent responses are very affirming of their experiences and of the school.
- The executive headteacher and Religious Education coordinator are passionate that liturgical and spiritual development are priorities for all in school and that time is devoted to this. This is evident in the provision for staff and the variety of opportunities offered to pupils.
- The executive headteacher has a very visible presence in school and a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in Collective Worship, through both formal and informal monitoring. Effective evaluation of staff strengths has resulted in an effective continuing professional development programme for all staff.
- There is clear evidence of the quality of Collective Worship being monitored and evaluated. It is given a high priority by all leaders and active involvement by governors ensures they have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for further development in Collective Worship.

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.

2

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	Our Lady Star of the Sea RCVA Primary
Unique reference number	114281
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	Mr D Dunleavy
Executive headteacher	Miss J Jones
Date of previous school inspection	May 2015
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