



St Mark's RCVA Primary School

Bardon Close, Westerhope, Newcastle, NE5 4DZ

School Unique Reference Number: **108498**

Inspection dates:	24 – 25 February 2015
Lead inspector:	Barbara Simpson

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

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Mark's RCVA Primary School is a good Catholic school because:

- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding because all members of this faith school community have a deep sense of belonging and enthusiastically embrace the demands membership entails, in the school, the parish and the wider community. They know that 'each one of them is precious to God'.
- The quality of Collective Worship is good because it is central to the life of the school and all pupils from a very young age are reverent and respectful during worship.
- The quality of Religious Education is good because pupils enjoy Religious Education, can explain its value and are keen to do well, leading to good progress in most lessons.

It is not yet outstanding because:

- Pupils across the school are not yet skilled in planning and leading Collective Worship independently.
- In Religious Education there are inconsistencies in the quality of assessment, marking and feedback provided by teachers.
- The governors' role in holding leaders to account for all aspects of performance in Religious Education is not yet fully embedded.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Mark's is an average sized primary school.
- Pupils are taught in seven single year-group classes from reception to year six.
- The school have recently added part-time nursery provision.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average, but rising.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the Pupil Premium is much higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special education needs is below average.
- The headteacher of the school is currently the executive headteacher of another local Catholic primary school.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education by:
 - Ensuring that marking provides clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.
 - Ensuring that pupils are given the time they need to respond to feedback in order to move their learning forward.
 - Developing the skills of governors so that they are able to effectively hold senior and subject leaders to account for all aspects of performance in Religious Education.
- Improve the quality of Collective Worship by:
 - Developing opportunities for pupil involvement in planning, preparing and leading Collective Worship independently across the school.

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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1

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

- All pupils have a deep sense of belonging to St Mark's school and enthusiastically embrace the demands membership entails. They take pride in organising and leading activities which promote the school's ethos within the school, parish and the wider community.
- St Mark's is an inclusive school. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and with English as an additional language is increasing. Pupils commented that all are welcomed and quickly settle in.
- Almost all pupils have a clear understanding of the school's mission statement through displays, classwork and worship. They know that 'Each of them is precious to God'.
- Enthusiastically supporting a wide range of charities, for example CAFOD, St Cuthbert's Care and Minnie Vinnies, is taken seriously by the whole school community and is very important to the school, demonstrating their understanding of a living faith and commitment to the most vulnerable and needy.
- Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of the Liturgical calendar and speak confidently of the school's Catholic identity and what this means.
- Links between the school and the parish are strong and effective.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They respect and care for each other and they feel safe and cared for. They are quick to forgive and to praise each other.
- Whole school retreats and spiritual days support the pupils' sense of identity and community.

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

- The core of the school's mission statement, 'Each one of us is precious to God', is lived out in the provision of the Catholic Life of the school and is particularly evident in relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves.
- There is a very strong family ethos which is welcoming and caring. Parents talk about the school as being, 'A little safe haven' and one they would 'recommend to everyone' because it is 'warm, friendly and welcoming'.
- There are systems in place to support vulnerable pupils through the use of a nurture room and the employment of a parent support advisor.
- The learning environment is a reflection of the school's Catholic character evidenced through displays, artefacts and the creation of sacred spaces throughout the school.

- The school promotes the highest standards of moral and ethical behaviour and stresses the importance of forgiving and being forgiven. Behaviour policies are rooted in Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic Church and are regularly reviewed, taking into account the views of pupils, parents and staff. As a result the behaviour of pupils throughout the school is outstanding.
- Personal, social, and health education and relationships and sex education programmes are in place and refer explicitly to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

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

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher, who is also the leader for Religious Education, have a very clear understanding of and vision for Catholic education and the role of the Catholic school in the mission of the church. Together they very effectively promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school. They are outstanding role models providing very clear direction for improvement.
- The school has developed a strong relationship with the parish priest and parish catechists regarding spiritual, curriculum and pastoral issues.
- The Religious Education subject leader provides outstanding leadership and support for the Catholic Life of the school by continually seeking out new and inspiring ways to challenge, guide and support pupils, staff and parents along their faith journeys, allowing them to develop a deep understanding of Catholic tradition.
- Governors make a significant contribution to the leadership of the Catholic Life of the school by challenging and supporting the senior leadership team. Governors are questioning, however they are not yet fully involved in formal monitoring and the role of the link governor is not yet fully established.
- The school's engagement with parents and carers is excellent. There are clear strategies for working with parents who are highly supportive of the school and its values.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

2

- 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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1

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

- St Mark's is a very prayerful community. Collective Worship engages the interest of all the pupils and they respond enthusiastically.
- All pupils from nursery to year six participate with reverence and respect; they join in prayers with confidence and sing with great enthusiasm.
- Pupils know what constitutes the various elements of Collective Worship and are able to prepare and lead class worship with increasing confidence. One pupil said that leading class worship made her feel special because she knew she was talking to Jesus. However, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to plan and lead worship independently in a range of contexts.
- Most pupils have a good understanding of religious seasons and feasts, for example, a pupil in reception told the inspector why there was a purple cloth on the altar in the outside role play 'church'.
- Pupils throughout the school are able to discuss what being part of a prayerful community means to them and Collective Worship contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- There is a deep respect for other faiths so pupils of other faiths willingly share their own beliefs in an atmosphere where they are accepted and appreciated.
- Older pupils enjoy using their prayer journals, which they clearly treat with reverence.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is good.

- The prayer life of the school is given a very high priority.
- Staff pray together regularly, both in school and during staff retreats. Most staff also keep prayer journals. These experiences have a significant positive impact on the school's sense of community.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to pray in different forms and settings, e.g. using the prayer garden, using prayer journals and taking part in lunchtime prayer groups during Lent and Advent.
- There is a clear policy for Collective Worship and the school ensures that it is regular and inclusive. Themes are based on the liturgical calendar, the scheme of work and current topics. Families are involved in pupils' religious development through 'travelling cribs' and 'Easter mystery bags' and the 'Wednesday Word'.
- Parents enjoy attending school Masses and class led Collective Worship, although the latter only occurs once a year for each class.

- Acts of Collective Worship are well resourced and planned using Diocesan guidelines. They are almost always engaging and pupils, staff, governors and parents all speak of particular examples which were inspiring.
- There is some good practice across the school in planning and preparing worship, however it is often very much teacher led. As yet not all pupils are presented with the opportunity to take age appropriate responsibility for creating liturgies or acts of worship.

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

- The headteacher and deputy head provide excellent leadership for Collective Worship and are outstanding role models for the prayer life of the school.
- Liturgical and spiritual development is part of the professional development cycle for all staff.
- Leaders place the highest priority on the development of excellent Collective Worship in all its forms throughout the school and go out of their way to make sure that they continually offer support by modelling and coaching to all staff who need it. Parents, staff, pupils and governors are consulted as part of the journey to excellence.
- Leaders therefore have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development of Collective Worship which is used to inform the school improvement plan.
- Leaders have a deeply rooted understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons, rites and symbols and ensure that displays and artefacts around the school reflect this.
- The subject leader for Religious Education has developed a programme of support for staff to develop their skills in leading Collective Worship and in helping pupils to become more independent in their leadership. She supports staff in the development of their spiritual and liturgical understanding. Staff respond very positively to these opportunities, having a significant effect on the spiritual life of the school.

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.

2

2

2

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

- Most pupils enjoy Religious Education and can explain its value. They understand that it is a core subject and are keen to do well. They work hard in lessons and behaviour for learning is excellent.
- Pupils spontaneously use a variety of religious vocabulary. Pupils in the reception class were easily able to point to the altar, priest and cross on the model of the church they were building. Older pupils are able to find passages of scripture and to make connections with their own lives.
- Pupils in most classes acquire knowledge quickly and are able to identify links with previous learning. They are developing well in their knowledge and understanding, as well as in their ability to reflect on meaning and are able to consider the impact of religious ideas on their own lives.
- Overall, outcomes are good. Baseline data shows that pupils enter school with knowledge and skills which are below what is expected for their age. All groups of pupils then make good progress over time, although girls make slightly better progress than boys. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities make similar progress to those without. Pupils of other faiths and ethnic minority backgrounds make as good and sometimes better progress than other pupils.

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

- The quality of teaching is never less than good and some is outstanding. Therefore most pupils and groups of pupils make good progress over time.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they use diocesan plans and guidance to good effect. Some teachers use very effective questioning to extend pupils' learning.
- The school has a good range of resources and strategies to promote learning and teachers use time well.
- Most teachers have high expectations of all pupils, although opportunities to extend the most able pupils' learning are sometimes missed.
- Most pupils work hard and the presentation of work is of a high standard. They respond articulately and enthusiastically to questioning.
- Additional adult support is used well, ensuring good progress for most pupils. Teachers differentiate lessons to meet the variety of pupils' needs. Marking and feedback are carried out regularly. This is most effective where feedback is of high quality and pupils are given time to improve, but this is not happening consistently across the school.

- Pupils use 'I can' statements but the use of levels of attainment in marking and feedback, to raise standards, is not consistent across the school.

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

- The subject leader of Religious Education is very committed, knowledgeable, enthusiastic and well informed about current developments.
- Leaders ensure that the school's vision is shared through staff meetings, briefings, retreats and attendance at diocesan training events. As a result Religious Education has a high profile in the school and is well planned to meet the needs of all the pupils. It compares favourably with other core subjects in terms of staffing, resources and time, although very few staff have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.
- Through a range of systematic and rigorous monitoring activities, including lesson observation, work and planning scrutiny and moderation, leaders have an accurate picture of achievement.
- Robust tracking and analysis provide a firm basis for diagnosing strengths and areas for development. Planning for improvement is therefore based upon sound evidence and data and the school is well placed to further improve and support teaching.
- Governors are beginning to hold leaders to account for performance in Religious Education. They are beginning to be more closely involved in monitoring activities, however their role is not yet embedded in the school's evaluation process.
- Pupils have access to very good quality sacramental preparation led by a team of parish catechists in partnership with the school.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

HOW EFFECTIVE THE SCHOOL IS IN PROVIDING CATHOLIC EDUCATION:**2****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

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**2**

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

2

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

2

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

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

SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Mark's RCVA Primary School
Unique reference number	108498
Local authority	Newcastle
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 schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.	
Chair of governors	Mrs P Barnett
Head teacher	Mrs A Miller
Date of previous school inspection	February 2010
Telephone number	0191 2869349
Email address	Alison.miller@stmarksrcprimary.co.uk