



St Aidan's RC First School

Norham Road, Ashington, Northumberland, NE63 0LF

URN: 122307

Inspection dates: 24-25 September 2013

Lead inspector: Karen Holmes

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS	PREVIOUS INSPECTION:	Good	2
	THIS INSPECTION:	Good	2
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	CATHOLIC LIFE:	Good	2
	COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:	Good	2
	RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:	Good	2

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Aidan's First School is a good school:

- St Aidan's is a good Catholic school. It is a very warm and welcoming community in which all share the headteacher's clear and passionate vision for the school. Caring relationships and the principles of Catholic education underpin the school's work as a community of faith and learning.
- The Catholic Life of the school is good. Pupils are actively and willingly involved in a variety of activities enhancing their moral, social and emotional development. They are considerate to others, respond to the needs of people beyond the school and understand the need for forgiveness.
- The quality of Religious Education (RE) is good. The areas for improvement from the last inspection have been addressed and the school is continuing to ensure that pupils make good progress through good teaching and frequent assessment.
- The quality of pupils' response to and participation in Collective Worship is good. They listen well, act reverently and are happy to take part in a variety of forms of worship.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- The quality of Religious Education is inconsistent across the school. Some lessons are not sufficiently planned and differentiated to meet the needs and interest of all children
- Marking does not provide specific guidance for children to help them to improve their work in RE.
- In Collective Worship there are limited opportunities for pupils to plan and prepare worship independently.
- Governors need to be more involved in the formal monitoring of the Catholic Life of the school.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- St Aidan's is a smaller than average sized primary school which serves the parish of St Aidan's.
- The majority of pupils come from a white British background.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average as is the proportion of pupils supported at school action. However the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The headteacher has provided part-time support to another school for the last two years but has now returned to St Aidan's on a full time basis.
- Since the last inspection there have been a significant number of staff changes especially within the senior leadership team.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

■ Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:

- ensuring that marking consistently provides information to pupils about how to improve their work;
- consistently and frequently allowing pupils the opportunity to respond to feedback given;
- using a wider range of artefacts, symbols, music, information and communications technology (ICT), drama and liturgical dance effectively to deepen pupils understanding, knowledge and appreciation providing more exciting, stimulating tasks which engage all children.

■ Improving the quality of Collective Worship by:

- providing opportunities for children to be involved more in leading, planning and preparation of Collective Worship in whole school and class based contexts.

■ Improving the quality of the Catholic Life of the school by:

- ensuring that governors are formally involved in all aspects of monitoring for the Catholic Life of the school.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

2

- 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.

- Pupils make an effective contribution to the Catholic Life of the school and gain considerable benefit from it. They are able to express their own beliefs with some confidence and are developing good understanding of how their faith impacts on their own lives and others. The mission statement is a living document which is reflected upon at every opportunity. Pupils take on responsibilities enthusiastically in their quest to serve others and recognise that this helps them to 'follow in the footsteps of Jesus'.
- Relationships within the school and parish are very positive and pupils value the many opportunities that they are given. They fully appreciate the community, of which they are a part, promoting the ethos of the school very effectively when involved with collecting and delivering their harvest boxes to the elderly. The members of the school council embrace their responsibilities to serve the needs of others with enthusiasm.
- Pupils work well together demonstrating very positive and enthusiastic attitudes to all aspects of school life. Behaviour management is very effective: pupils are polite and considerate of others demonstrating good emotional awareness. Pupils value the Catholic tradition of their school and are proud of it. They are aware of the importance of spiritual values. They show an interest in, and are developing knowledge of, the religious life of others.

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

- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is good. Pupils, staff and parents are committed to the vision for the school as stated in the mission statement: 'To affirm the worth of each person and reach full potential in Christ'. They work together as a cohesive team providing challenge and support for one another, ensuring that Christ is at the centre of all that takes place at St Aidan's.
- Pupils have many opportunities to participate fully in a number of key events and celebrations throughout the liturgical year in the school and within the parish. The opportunity for contemplative prayer, recently introduced by the parish priest, reinforces the idea that the children can talk to God 'any time, any place'. Thoughtful liturgies and assemblies provide time for pupils to reflect and share thoughts linked to Gospel values. Themed worship, linked with 'statements to live by' provides good opportunities to enhance pupils' spiritual and moral development.

- There are clear signs of the school's Catholic character with creative displays which provide pupils with opportunities for thought and reflection.

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

- Leaders and managers effectively promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school. Staff and pupils work together to live the mission of the school with understanding and appreciation, consequently pupils are able to articulate the distinctive mission of the school well. Leaders are highly ambitious for all children of the school providing clear direction for the Catholic Life of the school.
- The headteacher and parish priest, who is a regular visitor to the school, are a source of inspiration for the whole community and they are firmly and deeply committed to the church's mission in education. Together they have a clear vision and high aspirations for future developments. Their strong promotion of Catholic values is clearly shared by the whole community who demonstrate great pride in their school.
- Governors discharge their statutory and canonical duties well. They work effectively with the staff and headteacher, committed to upholding the strong caring ethos that exists. They are becoming more involved in evaluating the Catholic Life of the school but a formal monitoring of the Catholic Life of the school by governors is not in place.

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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Pupils' response to and participation in Collective Worship is good.

- St Aidan's is a prayerful community and from the earliest age pupils act reverently and show respect when participating in acts of worship. They listen well and are happy to take part in Collective Worship, liturgies, Masses and assemblies, though they are not yet given opportunities to plan and lead them.
- Pupils are at ease when praying in their school community and participate willingly. They can reflect silently and are developing a good awareness of a variety of styles and forms of prayer. They sing joyfully and respond positively to spontaneous prayer. They are developing a good understanding of the religious seasons, liturgical colours and feasts.
- Adults provide good role models for the children and contribute significantly to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. Children are supported to wonder, contemplate and reflect. They show respect for different faiths and are aware that religious beliefs are important.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is good

- Acts of Collective Worship are central to the life of the school and make a significant contribution to the moral and spiritual needs of the pupils. There is a clear policy for Collective Worship with opportunities for staff and pupils to pray together in a variety of forms of worship. Staff work collaboratively with the parish priest to ensure that staff and pupils are becoming more skilled in understanding and participating in a range of liturgies and celebrations in school and church. However, pupils have limited opportunities to plan and prepare worship independently.
- Collective Worship is carefully planned and resourced to reflect the liturgical year, linked to the Sunday Gospel, whilst also embracing current issues through ethos statements. Praying together is a daily experience with opportunities for meditative prayer developing throughout the school. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to 'enjoy the silence'.
- Parents, parishioners and governors are invited to share in various acts of Collective Worship, when appropriate. Encouraging further family participation in school and parish events is an important part of the school's action plan.

Leaders and Managers' promotion, monitoring and evaluation of the provision for Collective Worship is good.

- The headteacher is highly motivated and aspirational in her vision for all staff and children in the school, providing an excellent role model. She has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of Collective Worship through formal and informal monitoring but feedback from all stakeholders is not yet sufficiently part of this process.
- Leaders model good practice in Collective Worship and staff work together to echo the strong vision and values placed upon all aspects of Collective Worship. Leaders offer staff regular opportunities to enhance their own spiritual and liturgical understanding through staff training and staff response to this is good.
- Sacramental preparation is well embedded and in line with Diocesan policy. The school works effectively with the parish to deliver the Sacramental programme.

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 monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

2

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- The majority of children enjoy their learning in Religious Education. They have positive attitudes and generally work well in lessons, applying themselves to the tasks working at a good pace. They take pride in their work and show interest and enthusiasm in their learning thinking deeply when wondering how Mary protected Jesus.
- Pupils start school with knowledge and skills typically below those expected for their age. They generally make good progress in their learning as they journey through school. There are slight variations in the attainment and progress of children with special educational needs and those who are known to be entitled to free school meals. Inspection findings show little variation between boys and girls.
- Due to the state of transition in level expectations across all diocesan school, the current averages for attainment and progress are not reliable benchmarks. Therefore no judgement will be made in this report against diocesan averages for either attainment or progress.
- Pupils take pride in their work. They acquire knowledge, understanding and skills appropriate to their age as well as developing their ability to reflect on meaning.

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

- Teaching and assessment is mainly good with most pupils achieving well over time. In lessons where teaching is good, teachers plan effective, fun activities which stimulate learning and capture pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Their subject knowledge is good, expectations are high and they use assessment of prior learning well to move the children on in their learning. Questioning is used effectively to assess understanding, monitor progress, build on previous learning and to reinforce the learning objective. Consequently, pupils demonstrate good levels of engagement and positive attitudes to their learning.
- In some lessons, however, the activities do not challenge pupils sufficiently to ensure good progress. This impacts on behaviour as pupils become bored and restless. Marking is generally positive and supportive however guidance, feedback and marking to move learning on are not used consistently and systems to allow pupils to respond are not effective in all classes. Marking does not consistently provide sufficient guidance to help the

pupils know how to improve their work in Religious Education.

- Teachers are increasingly confident in their subject knowledge and have valued the help and support provided by the diocese in meeting the demands of the new Religious Education programme.

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

- A range of monitoring activities relating to provision and outcomes in Religious Education is now established and this has enabled the headteacher to have an accurate awareness of the areas for development. The previous Religious Education coordinator has ensured that good systems are in place to give an accurate picture of progress and attainment over time. The analysis of data is grounded in a secure knowledge of the individual pupil.
- The Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and is given a high profile throughout the school. All staff have attended, or will be attending, training on the new programme 'Come and See'. The school works effectively with a range of partners to increase the range and quality of opportunities for pupils which they embrace enthusiastically.
- The governing body discharge their statutory and canonical duties well. They are well led by a newly appointed chair of governors who has a sound knowledge of the school. Governors are regular visitors into school and are instrumental when evaluating impact. They are supportive but also confident and questioning in their approach.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

HOW EFFECTIVE THE SCHOOL IS IN PROVIDING CATHOLIC EDUCATION:

2

CATHOLIC LIFE:

2

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

2

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

2

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

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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:

2

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

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The quality of provision for Collective Worship

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

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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

Unique reference number	122307
Local authority	Northumberland

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.

Type of school	First
Chair of governors	Mrs Julie Burns
Headteacher	Mrs Samantha Leslie
Date of previous school inspection	21 – 22 October 2008
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