

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



S48 Inspection Report

**Our Lady & St Bede RC Comprehensive School,
Stockton on Tees**

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

School: Our Lady and St Bede RC School

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School URN: 111758

Headteacher: Mr John Smith

Chair of Governors: Mr Simon Roberts

Lead Inspector: Mr Tony McCourt

Team Inspector: Mr Dan Murray

Date of Inspection 9 and 10 May 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.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Our Lady and St Bede is a popular 11-16 Catholic school with a Specialist Arts status located in Stockton. The school is a member of the Hexham and Newcastle Diocesan Partnership (South). Pupils come from all areas of Stockton and Eaglescliffe, covering a range of social and economic backgrounds. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or special needs is above average and the school is a centre for excellence in its provision for this group of pupils.

Pupil Catchment

Number of pupils on roll: **696**

Planned Admission Number of Pupils: **120**

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: **66%**

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: **22.6%**

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: **4.7%**

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: **6.7%**

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: **10.5%**

Percentage of pupils with special needs: **13%**

Staffing

Full time teachers: **43**

Part time teachers: **4**

Percentage of Catholic teachers: **66%**

RE Department Staffing

Number of full time RE teachers: **4**

Number of part time RE teachers: **1**

Percentage of Catholic teachers: **100%**

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: **100%**

Percentage of learning time given to Religious Education

Year 7 **10%**

Year 8 **10%**

Year 9 **10%**

Year 10 **10%**

Year 11 **10%**

Parishes served by the school

St Patrick's, Stockton on Tees

St Bede's, Stockton on Tees

St Cuthbert's, Stockton on Tees

St Mary's, Stockton on Tees

English Martyrs & SS Peter and Paul, Stockton on Tees

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic education

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

MAIN FINDINGS

Our Lady and St Bede's school provides a good Catholic education. A calm and welcoming atmosphere permeates the school. Pupils feel secure and respected and, along with staff, are proud to be members of a school community rooted in Gospel values. The Catholic life of the school enriches the personal, spiritual and emotional development of the pupils. The senior team has worked consistently to address areas for improvement, communicating high expectations to pupils and staff and engendering a shared vision of the Catholic life of the school. Vulnerable groups benefit from the work of a dedicated team and the specialist provision. Pupils are considerate and caring to those in need and respond generously to requests for help in school and beyond. Strong, positive relationships are a distinctive feature of the school community.

The majority of pupils enjoy and are engaged in their learning. They appreciate the dedication and support of their Religious Education (RE) teachers. The level of attainment is currently average although the present year eleven (YR11) cohort reveals a more optimistic upward trend. Changes are planned in the procedures for assessment and guidance in order to embed rigour and consistency. The quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs is good. They benefit from the expertise of teaching and support staff, enabling pupils to access the RE curriculum with confidence. The concerted effort of senior leaders, RE staff and the chaplain has led to the creation of opportunities for prayer and worship. Pupils respond with reverence and appreciation and are especially enthusiastic when they are actively involved in the planning and presentation. Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school.

The provision for Catholic education is good. Staff and local clergy have worked together to enrich the faith life of the school. There is a range of liturgical celebrations, liaison with parishes, links with Ethiopia and charitable activities. The RE department ensures that the curriculum matches the needs of the pupils and is beginning to improve outcomes. The quality of collective worship is good with assemblies imaginatively prepared and incorporating some pupil participation.

The capacity for sustained improvement is good. Leaders and managers are deeply committed to nurturing the Catholic life of the school. They lead by example and promote spiritual and moral development through worship, the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. As a consequence, pupils appreciate and understand the richness of the Church's mission and its relevance for their lives. Leaders and managers know the school's strengths and priorities for improvement and recognise the need for more robust and systematic monitoring and evaluation processes. The governors are supportive of the Catholic dimension of the school and they are currently devising a more effective ways of monitoring the school's RE department.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Formalise the assessment procedures for monitoring and evaluation of both pupil work and lesson observations
- governors should formalise their reporting procedure to ensure accountability for Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school
- create opportunities for greater pupil involvement in the preparation and participation of liturgies.

PUPILS

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

3

- how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in RE
 - ❖ the quality of pupils’ learning and their progress
 - ❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress
 - ❖ pupils’ attainment in RE
- the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school
- how well pupils respond to and participate in the school’s collective worship

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A positive atmosphere pervades most aspects of the pupils’ approach to and attitude towards RE. Lesson observations confirm that the majority of pupils enjoy and are engaged in their learning and as a result are generally achieving improving results at the end of each key stage. There is an average level of attainment in the subject and the progress of current cohorts suggests an upward trend especially the progress of the YR11 cohort. The school recognises that the GCSE achievement in recent years has been disappointing, however increased staffing and broadening of departmental responsibility is indicative of the changes necessary to further secure improvement in this area. Overall attainment is broadly average however internal monitoring suggests that this may improve over time. Student voice confirmed the enjoyment of RE lessons by students who expressed the quality of support by the RE teachers.

The quality of learning of pupils with particular needs is good. The special educational needs unit, including the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) provision, is impressive and enables students with a diverse range of educational needs to access the RE curriculum. Differentiation is evident in some lessons but has yet to make a serious impact upon outcomes at GCSE. Departmental teachers are clearly aware of the students with particular needs however, active differentiation was not always evident in the lessons observed.

Pupils benefit greatly from the Catholic life of the school and are given a variety of opportunities to contribute to it. They have responded enthusiastically to events such as the Papal visit, supporting links with Ethiopia and other fund raising projects. They generously give their time to work alongside the school chaplain. Pupils are actively involved in preparing the weekly voluntary Mass, end of term liturgies and assemblies. Days of reflection for form and year groups encourage reflection on their own values and beliefs. Currently, there is a coordinated programme enabling pupils and staff to prepare for the school mission later in the year.

There is an established programme of class based acts of worship, year group Masses and termly whole school assemblies where pupils participate reverently and attentively. In form groups, staff work energetically to ensure pupils have material which engages their interest. The chaplain assists pupils in the preparation of year group liturgies. Whole school assemblies are led by staff but with only some pupil involvement. Pupils are attentive and respond appreciatively to the relevant themes and thoughtfully prepared presentations supported by music and film extracts. The form group Mass, celebrated by local clergy, is an opportunity for

pupils to contribute to preparing acts of worship. Key seasons of the year are recognised in prayer and liturgy and other religious festivals are observed.

PROVISION

How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education

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- the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in RE
- the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in RE
- the extent to which RE curriculum meets pupils' needs
- the quality of collective worship provided by the school

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The teaching of RE is usually well planned, well resourced and well delivered. Pupils usually benefit from a number of well-structured activities as was demonstrated in the YR11 revision session, team-taught to half a year group during the inspection. Most pupils demonstrate a willingness to learn and benefit from the subject knowledge of their classroom teachers. The head of department shares her enthusiasm and expertise through the sharing of resources and teaching strategies to good effect. Some low level disruption in a number of lessons during the inspection spoilt the otherwise exemplary behaviour of the pupils. The active engagement strategies demonstrated during the revision sessions would, if incorporated into classroom lessons, serve to further involve the pupils in their learning.

The effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance demonstrated during the inspection was inconsistent. Assessment and academic guidance procedures are in place and the head of department and her team are working effectively to improve the quality of these. However, the impact of these has yet to be fully realised. Work scrutiny revealed the quality of formative marking is inconsistent, with some examples of excellent practice at GCSE but other areas where development is needed. The teacher assessment and guidance given by some teachers is of a high quality, however, this is not yet consistent throughout the department. The pupils speak very highly of the quality and support of the academic guidance but a number would like greater clarity on how to improve their work. The recent work by the senior leadership team provides an informed overall commentary on the progress of cohorts but until this impacts in the classroom its effect will not be realised.

The head of RE is passionate about meeting the needs of her students and the curriculum is expanding to meet those needs. The early entrance of a number of gifted and talented students for GCSE in years nine and ten will afford her the opportunity to introduce AS Level Religious Studies in due course. A small number of students still follow the short course GCSE and entry level depending upon prior attainment. The display in some classrooms of specialist vocabulary aids learning and promotes religious literacy. The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

The acts of collective worship that were celebrated during the inspection clearly demonstrate the well-resourced and high profile nature of the prayer life at Our Lady and St Bede's. The leadership of the school supports the provision of a full-time chaplain who has generous resources at her disposal. The headteacher takes an active role in the provision of worship especially for whole school events. The programme for the prayer life of the school reflects the Church's calendar and responds effectively to local circumstances. The preparation for the school mission to take place in the next academic year demonstrated the school wide approach to prayer and worship.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing 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 and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils
- how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for RE and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils
- 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
- how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well-being
- how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion.

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Leaders and managers are highly committed to the mission of the Church. Spiritual and moral development is at the centre of the broad and balanced curriculum. A monitoring programme of provision and outcomes serves to inform leaders and managers of the school's strengths and priorities for development. Key personnel are involved in the planning which is evidence based. The school's mission is effectively communicated to the pupils who, in turn, articulate their understanding with confidence. RE has a strong influence on the moral and spiritual development of pupils. The community of Our Lady and St Bede's values the Catholic life of the school.

RE is clearly a priority at the school and leaders at all levels speak positively about improvement; despite this the process of monitoring and evaluation appears to lack routine and rigour. The provision of departmental lesson observations is neither systematic nor regular. School leaders are confident about the quality of teaching in RE but the systems in place for monitoring this are limited. Departmental self-evaluation is largely accurate but it is not at present fully informed by formal student voice and work scrutiny. The available data on pupils' progress could be used more effectively at departmental level to inform planning and assessment on a daily basis. The head of department is keen to visit other Diocesan schools in order to learn from models of improved practice, especially in similar socio-economic contexts. The headteacher and governors are considering models for improving the formal monitoring and evaluation of RE as an integral part of their work.

The enthusiastic commitment and varied range of expertise in the governing body are used to good effect in determining the direction of the Catholic life of the school. Governors take seriously the discharge of their statutory and canonical duties. They are actively involved in evaluating the school's strengths and areas for development. Regular reports submitted to governors' meetings are used to inform decisions about all areas of school life. Their relationships with staff are constructive and they support the school leadership in addressing weaknesses and ensuring necessary improvements are implemented. Although a programme for link governors is being created, there is as yet no invitation to the head of RE to report personally to the governing body. Views of parents and other stakeholders, which are usually received informally, are taken into account when evaluating the Catholic life of the school.

There is a range of partnerships which provides enhanced learning opportunities for pupils. Leaders and managers are actively involved in promoting partnerships with other schools, with parishes and the diocese and other agencies to enable pupils to achieve academically and develop spiritually, socially and culturally. The presence within the school of a local authority facility for autistic pupils enhances the learning opportunities for these vulnerable pupils. Governors support school leadership in ensuring financial provision for partnership activities.

The members of Our Lady and St Bede's school community exhibit a strong sense of belonging. Through the example of school leaders, pupils learn to respect difference, value diversity and embrace equal opportunities for all. Relationships among pupils are very positive: younger members of the school community express confidence in the caring disposition of older pupils. Vulnerable pupils are welcomed, integrate socially and progress academically. Links with countries in Africa helps pupils to appreciate faiths and cultures different from their own. When called upon, pupils have responded generously to assist those living on the margins of society in their neighbourhood and abroad.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Overall effectiveness	2						
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	2						
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