



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

## DENOMINATIONAL (S48) INSPECTION REPORT

# St Mary's RC Primary School

Duckpool Lane, Whickham, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE16 4TE

School Unique Reference Number: **108396**

**Inspection dates:** 19 – 20 November 2013

**Lead inspector:** Barbara Simpson

| Overall effectiveness       | Previous inspection: | Good               | 2 |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---|
|                             | This inspection:     | <b>Outstanding</b> | 1 |
| <b>Catholic Life:</b>       | Outstanding          |                    | 1 |
| <b>Collective Worship:</b>  | Outstanding          |                    | 1 |
| <b>Religious Education:</b> | Outstanding          |                    | 1 |

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Mary's RC Primary School is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding because all members of this faith school community feel a deep sense of belonging and enthusiastically take part in the many opportunities open to them to live out their faith, both in the school and the parish community
- The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding because of the way the pupils respond to it and the way it is led and monitored.
- The quality of Religious Education is outstanding overall because thorough planning, assessment and consistently outstanding teaching, along with excellent resources lead to rapid progress in most lessons.

## FULL REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Mary's is an average sized primary school serving the town of Whickham.
- Most pupils are White British
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the Pupil Premium is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average.
- There have been many staff changes since the last inspection, including the post of Religious Education coordinator.

### WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Further develop the effectiveness of the learning process by ensuring that:
  - Levels of attainment are consistently used and shared with pupils across the school to enable all pupils to make rapid progress.
- The teaching of relationship and sex education is strengthened across the school by:
  - Revisiting Diocesan guidelines and embedding them into Religious Education and personal, social and health education (PSHE) planning and teaching.
  - Ensuring that all staff receive up to date training in the teaching of relationships and sex education.

## 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.**

- Almost all pupils have a deep experience of belonging to St Mary's school and enthusiastically embrace the demands that membership of the community entails. As a result they take a leading role in those activities which promote the school's ethos, within the school and in the wider community.
- They have a clear understanding of their mission statement, which the whole school has recently worked on, finding examples of how it is lived out in their school on a daily basis. Pupils told the inspector that they usually get on well with each other and that when there were disagreements, they were encouraged to try to 'patch things up themselves' first, whenever possible.
- Supporting a wide range of charities, both at home and abroad, is obviously very important to the school community, demonstrating their understanding of a living faith.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the liturgical year and its key celebrations. They speak confidently of their Catholic identity and what this means.
- Links between the school and parish are almost seamless and the pupils are enthusiastically involved in parish celebrations and activities.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they feel safe and cared for.

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

- All staff are involved in nurturing and reviewing the school's mission statement, which is rooted in fundamental Christian values and beliefs that each child is made in the image and likeness of God. Staff, pupils and parents were involved in its formation and involved in regular reviews.
- All pupils' achievements are celebrated at weekly celebration assemblies and every pupil is taught that in God, all things are possible and that they celebrate each other's God given talents and abilities as a Christian family.
- Parents commented on how well their children are nurtured and cared for and how they have the highest possible trust in the school.
- There is an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable and needy in school,

including the provision of nurture groups, buddying and trained welfare counsellors.

- The sex and relationships education (SRE) programme is in place but is not fully embedded across the school. The headteacher has identified the need for development, by making the embedding of SRE and staff training part of the teachers' appraisal targets.
- Holding the 'Rights Respecting School Award', and the work towards level two, clearly reflects the Catholic ethos of the school and the values that underpin it.

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

- The school's leadership team is deeply committed to the church's mission in education and lead by example. Leaders at all levels have a shared vision and high expectations, leading to highly effective monitoring of the Catholic Life of the school.
- Leaders liaise and collaborate with other stakeholders in the school and parish to enable wider celebration and development of the school's Catholic faith. The school has developed a strong relationship with the parish priest regarding spiritual, curriculum and pastoral issues.
- The joint Religious Education subject leaders provide outstanding leadership and support for the Catholic Life of the school by continually seeking out new and exciting ways to challenge, support and guide pupils along their faith journeys, allowing them to develop a deep understanding of Catholic tradition.
- There are very clear and effective systems in place to promote, monitor and evaluate this provision, which are clearly linked to school improvement and professional development and subsequently outcomes for pupils. Leaders demonstrate outstanding capacity to develop the spiritual life of colleagues and pupils.
- Governors make a significant contribution to the leadership of the Catholic Life of the school. They are involved in challenging and supporting the senior leadership team and making informed decisions which determine the direction of the Catholic Life of the school.

## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

### THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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- 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.**

- St Mary's is a prayerful community. Pupils told the inspector that they enjoy leading and taking part in various forms of Collective Worship, as they like to have the opportunity to communicate with God.
- During worship children listen, join in and respond in a sincere and respectful way. All pupils across the school sing enthusiastically and pray confidently.
- Pupils prepare and lead class worship, from reception class upwards, with increasing confidence and independence, appropriate to their age and development. They use scripture, music, silence, artefacts and dance confidently and imaginatively to create very spiritual acts of worship.
- Outstanding practice was observed when year three pupils prepared and led worship on a theme of 'The Light of Christ', which they linked to the recent typhoon in the Philippines.
- Pupils participate actively and with enthusiasm in the school's sacramental preparation programme, which takes place during school time.
- Pupils showed a secure understanding of the church's liturgical year, its seasons and feasts.
- There is a sense of respect for other faiths. Pupils learn about a variety of different faiths within curriculum Religious Education (Judaism and Islam), as well as in other curriculum subjects, for example Hinduism in the year four topic on India. The school has a long established link with Kenya which has involved reciprocal visits.

**The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.**

- Collective Worship is central to the life of the school and is given the highest possible priority in terms of planning, resourcing and leadership. Each day starts with staff prayer, which sets the tone for the day.
- There is a rich variety of different forms of worship, which are enthusiastically embraced by the whole school community. Pupils are given many opportunities to take responsibility for leading worship in the school in a variety of ways.
- Themes for Collective Worship throughout the school reflect the liturgical year, curriculum RE and special events.
- Pupils, governors and parents commented on how much they value the school's Collective Worship, in all its forms, which include class based worship led by pupils,

- key stage based worship, led in turn by staff, whole school assemblies and Masses.
- Most teachers are highly skilled in helping pupils plan and lead quality worship, using diocesan guidelines and resources.
- Recently the school has facilitated parents' Masses and grandparents' Masses in school, which have received an enthusiastic response. Other examples of Collective Worship include a pilgrimage day for all pupils during Lent, a year three retreat to Holy Island and a year six leavers' retreat.
- There are strong links with the parish where pupils serve at Mass and take an active part in Sunday Mass and other worship.

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

- Leaders have excellent knowledge of how to plan and deliver high quality Collective Worship and model outstanding practice to help develop the skills of their colleagues. They continually support staff in their spiritual and liturgical understanding. Due to the strong culture of receptivity that leaders have created, response to this support is wholehearted and enthusiastic leading to continuous improvement over time.
- Leaders have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons, rites and symbols. They lead the school in providing and maintaining high quality resources to enrich and strengthen pupils' understanding.
- The school uses staff, governor, pupil and parental feedback to maximise the impact of Collective Worship on the life of the school. This feedback is used to target staff development and to continually improve and enrich pupils' Collective Worship experiences.
- There are strong monitoring and evaluation procedures throughout the school for Collective Worship. The monitoring and evaluation of Collective Worship is a priority in the regular review of school performance, this in conjunction with scrutiny of Collective Worship record files, staff meetings, informal chats and learning walks, drives continual improvement and invigoration of Collective Worship.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

- 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 outstanding.**

- Pupils told the inspector that they enjoy RE and they demonstrated an impressive level of knowledge, insight and maturity in their lessons.
- Pupils in all lessons across the school concentrate exceptionally well and behaviour for learning is outstanding.
- Pupils were seen to be making rapid progress during lessons and to show a mature level of understanding of the topics they were studying.
- Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are well supported and are achieving well. Inspection findings show no notable differences between groups of learners.
- Across the school, pupils are developing extremely well in knowledge and understanding, in the ability to reflect on meaning and in their ability to relate the impact of religious ideas to their daily lives.
- Pupils from all age groups demonstrate a very impressive religious vocabulary, which they use when answering questions and in their written work.
- Due to the state of transition in level expectations across all diocesan schools, 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.

#### **The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.**

- The majority of teaching observed was outstanding and never less than consistently good.
- Teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge, high expectations and enthusiasm.
- In the best lessons teachers use levels of attainment which helps pupils to know and understand what is required to reach the next level and make rapid progress. However this is not consistent across the school.
- Teachers plan interesting and imaginative lessons, which build upon prior learning, using a good range of high quality resources. They use time effectively to maximise learning opportunities, with a wide range of activities, e.g. role play, information communications technology (ICT), art, music and artefacts.
- Tasks are very well differentiated and teachers regularly check understanding and progress throughout the lesson, ensuring that all children's learning needs are met. Teaching

assistants are effectively deployed and work very well in supporting pupils of different abilities.

- Marking and feedback are very good and pupils in most classes are given time to improve pieces of work. Pupils are able to improve their work by, for example, finding relevant pieces of scripture independently. Assessments are regular and systematic and both internal and external moderation shows levelling is accurate.
- Teachers use 'I can' grids to help pupils to evaluate their own learning and the school has adapted these recently to make clearer links between the learning focus and the task being undertaken by the pupils. The inspector saw key stage two pupils involved in self-evaluation. Key stage two pupils recorded some remarkable insight into their own religious development, whilst key stage one pupils respond verbally to their teachers.

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

- The commitment, leadership and example of the joint Religious Education subject leaders has a significant impact on the raising of standards in Religious Education and is wholeheartedly supported by governors and the whole school and parish community
- There is a focus on promoting high standards and high quality of teaching and learning. One example being the compilation of a portfolio of examples of outstanding work in the school, which aids moderation and professional development. Religious Education coordinators are currently working on a new self-assessment system to help pupils to have a greater understanding of achievement and progression in Religious Education.
- Leaders carry out regular monitoring and analysis of teaching and attainment. All staff benefit from these robust systems and from regular professional development, both in-house and provided by the diocese, leading to a raising of standards.
- Leaders model outstanding examples of best practice in the teaching of RE, focusing relentlessly on spreading the best possible teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Sacramental preparation is given high priority by leaders and takes place in school, with support from parish catechists.
- Clear steps for ongoing improvement are identified in the school improvement plan and are linked to teachers' targets for appraisal. This leads to a relentless and effective drive to raise standards and as a result outcomes in Religious Education for the overwhelming majority of pupils are high.
- Leaders plan the Religious Education curriculum, taking the lead from the 'Come and See' programme, making imaginative and thought provoking alterations, where appropriate, to maximise the impact on all learners. The curriculum is planned to enable pupils to gain first-hand experiences of the liturgical life of the Catholic Church and of a wide diversity of religious and belief communities.

## 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

### COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:

1

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

1

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.

1

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

1

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

1

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education

1

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

1

## SCHOOL DETAILS

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>School name</b>   | St Mary's RC Primary School             |
| <b>Unique reference number</b>   | 108396                                  |
| <b>Local authority</b>   | Gateshead                               |
| 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. |   |
| <b>Chair of governors</b>  | Michael Currie                          |
| <b>Head teacher</b>  | Mary McMillan                           |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | December 2008                           |
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