



St Mary's RC Primary

Central Avenue, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, DL5 5NP

School Unique Reference Number: **114265**

Inspection dates:	12 – 13 November 2013
Lead inspector:	Karen Holmes

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

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Mary's RC Primary is a good Catholic school because:

- St Mary's is a good Catholic school. It is warm and welcoming with a tangible sense of community. The mission and ethos of Catholic education is given a very high priority.
- The quality of Religious Education is good. Learning and progress are good in each key stage. Pupils enjoy their learning and can explain how it impacts on their lives.
- Pupils make a good contribution to the Catholic Life of the school. The well-being and personal development of the individual is a priority. The varied activities in which pupils are involved enhance their moral, social and emotional development.
- Collective Worship at St Mary's is good. It is embedded in the life of the school and valued by all of the school community.

It is not yet outstanding because:

- The quality of teaching in Religious Education is inconsistent across the school. A small proportion of teaching requires improvement.
- Pupils are not consistently involved in self-evaluation of their work or their impact on the Catholic Life of the school.
- Marking and feedback for pupils does not consistently provide information on how they can improve their work.
- In Collective Worship pupils do not always demonstrate a palpable enthusiasm or depth of response.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Mary's is a smaller than average primary school situated in a residential area of Newton Aycliffe. It is federated with St Joseph's, a neighbouring primary school with which it shares a governing body, and serves the parish of the Holy Family of Great Aycliffe and Shildon.
- The school serves a broad social mix of families with the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those children who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority).
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- Most pupils are of white British origin with a very small number from other ethnic groups.
- The headteacher was appointed to the role in September 2013.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Further develop quality of teaching and learning process by:
 - Building on the existing good practice to ensure that all teachers consistently differentiate tasks and teaching effectively, by task as well as by outcome, to meet the needs of all pupils
 - sharing good practice of teaching and marking to ensure consistency across age groups
 - ensure that pupils are aware of their attainment and best practice in self-assessment is consistently used throughout the school
 - ensuring that all staff have relevant and up to date training in 'Come and See' and have a secure knowledge of each level of attainment
- Further develop the Catholic Life of the school by:
 - Providing opportunities for all pupils to be involved in formally monitoring the Catholic Life of the school
- Further develop the quality of Collective Worship by:
 - Providing a greater variety of opportunities for Collective Worship which enthuse and inspire all pupils.

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 is good.

- The mission statement is an important part of religious life at St Mary's where the uniqueness of each person is celebrated. Both parents and pupils benefit from the Catholic ethos which permeates the school.
- Pupils feel important and valued and make a good contribution to the Catholic Life of the school. Pupils are proud of their school and willingly take on responsibilities such as head boy and head girl. They are not yet involved in monitoring the impact of their actions on the Catholic Life of the school.
- Pupils confidently express their own views and the reasons for the choices they make demonstrating a good understanding of how important it is to forgive and be forgiven. They are able to articulate their awareness of the teachings of Jesus in the way they treat others.
- Pupils are aware of the needs of others and are involved in a range of fund-raising opportunities within the local community and beyond. They confidently explain the aims of the recently formed 'Mini-Vinnies' and are proud of their Harvest collection which they distributed in the neighbourhood.
- Pupils take advantage of the range of opportunities provided by the school and recognise how this helps them to become better people. Behaviour is very good and pupils are aware of the impact of their actions on others.
- Pupils show a good understanding of the importance of key celebrations throughout the liturgical year in school and the parish community. They show interest in and are developing knowledge of the religious life of others from an early age.

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

- The mission of the school is understood and embraced by all pupils in their daily life but pupils are not routinely involved with evaluating the Catholic Life of the school, or planning improvements to it.
- There is a very tangible sense of family and community in all aspects of school life which is evident in the quality of relationships that exists between stakeholders. There is increasing support from and for parents: the mother's prayer group effectively supports families to grow in faith.
- Pastoral care for pupils is outstanding due to the commitment of all stakeholders with an ethos of mutual respect and support. One parent was very moved by the

fact that all pupils were taught sign language to address a need in the school. Staff play an active part in ensuring the best possible outcomes for children with strong teamwork fuelled by the desire to move the school forward.

- The school is a prayerful community where the pastoral needs of staff are understood and catered for. Regular retreats and quality resources are used well to further enhance the Catholic identity of the school.
- The behaviour policy reflects Gospel values and is rooted in the school mission statement. Consequently pupils have high standards of behaviour and positive relationships exist between all members of the school community.
- An effective programme for Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is taught as an integral part of Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE) and this allows pupils to develop understanding appropriate to their age,

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

- Leaders are firmly committed to the church's mission in education and are excellent role models for parents and staff. They promote a welcoming and caring ethos reflecting Gospel values.
- All leaders and managers, including the governing body, have high expectations for the continuing development of the Catholic Life of the School. They have a clear picture of the school's role in the strong promotion of Catholic values throughout the community.
- The recently appointed headteacher has been well supported by the inspirational Religious Education coordinator and together they have a clear vision and deep commitment to the Church's mission in education.
- Leaders are fully committed to improving and embedding procedures to monitor and evaluate provision for the Catholic Life of the school. The highly effective Religious Education coordinator, supported by the headteacher, is building an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Governors are ambitious for the school and share in the aspirations of the headteacher and Religious Education coordinator. They are visible around school, providing support and challenge where necessary. Governors discharge their statutory and canonical duties well.
- The school engages well with parents and carers who describe a warm welcome: 'It's like one big family'. Parents and parishioners feel welcomed and valued sharing the Friday assembly which can be 'emotional, thought provoking and interesting'.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF 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.

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

- St Mary's is a prayerful community where pupils respond well to the opportunities the school provides for them to participate in Collective Worship. Pupils speak of feeling calm and peaceful during and after Collective Worship which contributes positively to their spiritual, moral and personal development.
- Pupils demonstrate good knowledge of what worship is about and are at ease when praying with their school community in large and small gatherings. They understand that there are different forms of worship as well as different types of prayer, both formal and informal. Pupils are receptive but lacked a depth of response and enthusiasm in the Collective Worship observed.
- Pupils are developing independent skills in leading worship and enjoy the opportunities that they are given to do this. There is progression of pupil involvement at age appropriate levels with pupils in year six given opportunities to prepare and deliver liturgies. Pupils are not involved in monitoring or evaluating their efforts however.
- Pupils are familiar with traditional prayers, appropriate to their age: they join in community prayers and are comfortable creating their own prayers. They know that song is a form of prayer and performed a beautiful version of the Hail Mary in song and sign language.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of religious seasons and feasts and the different demands this makes on our worship.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is good.

- There is a clear policy for Collective Worship with a well-structured programme of liturgies and assemblies which are thoughtfully resourced. Acts of worship are appropriate to the age and needs of the pupils with themes based upon the liturgical calendar or the curriculum topic.
- Staff and pupils pray together regularly and all pupils have daily opportunities for prayer. The use of annual prayer and reflection days has promoted a sense of reflection and has further developed good spiritual awareness. Pupils understand prayer and embrace it. Their prayer journals are well-used and valued.
- Collective Worship is often reflective and fully inclusive enabling all pupils to take part. Staff work with pupils to enable them to plan, prepare and lead worship carefully planned for their developmental age. They encourage and develop a real

understanding and spiritual awareness. Parents and carers are encouraged to attend worship and are doing so in increasing numbers.

- All classes have a spiritual focal point with well-thought out resources which provide pupils with stimuli for thought and reflection.

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

- The Religious Education coordinator is highly visible and has a very accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses in Collective Worship. She radiates energy and enthusiasm in her role as leader of the subject providing support and encouragement for pupils, staff and parents.
- Leaders and managers provide opportunities for pupils to reflect upon the Church's liturgical year, seasons, rites and symbols through the provision of Collective Worship experiences pertinent to the lives of pupils at St Mary's, such as wearing a purple ribbon during Lent and the travelling crib at Advent.
- Staff work together to show a shared vision and the strong values placed upon all aspects of Collective Worship. Liturgical and spiritual development is seen as ongoing professional development. Leaders recognise the importance of nurturing staff as well as pupils enhancing their spiritual development through retreat days. Consequently staff feel valued and involved through shared responsibility.
- Acts of Collective Worship have a positive impact on all stakeholders and are reflective of the ethos 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.

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

- Most pupils enjoy their learning in Religious Education and have positive attitudes towards it. They find it interesting and can explain why it is important. 'We learn stories that help you in life'. Generally pupils work steadily on the tasks set displaying good behaviour for learning.
- Pupils are keen to do their best and generally apply themselves well in lessons working at a good pace. They generally seek to produce their best work and are often interested and enthusiastic about their learning due to the range of teaching approaches and resources.
- Book scrutiny shows a good range of activities where progress is evident and as a result of effective support staff, pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are well supported and achieve well according to their age and capacity.
- Pupils acquire knowledge quickly and are secure in their understanding. They develop a range of skills well and can apply these skills to their everyday life.
- 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 average for either attainment or progress.

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

- As a result of teaching that is mainly good, most pupils are achieving well over time. However teaching is variable across the key stages ranging from 'Requires Improvement' to 'Good with Outstanding features'.
- Teachers have a clear understanding of the value of Religious Education which they communicate effectively to pupils. Generally teachers have a sound subject knowledge which they use in planning and teaching Religious Education. In the best lessons teachers use a range of resources and effective questioning to clarify and deepen understanding and therefore promote good learning. In some lessons the level of challenge does not deepen or extend learning because tasks and teaching are not sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Generally teachers have high expectations of pupils and as a result of sharing 'I Can' statements and success criteria, pupils are beginning to understand how well they are doing. However, pupils do not know which level they are working at, nor how to improve their work to achieve the next level.

- There is a lack of consistency in the guidance given by teachers in marking; consequently pupils are not always clear about what is expected of them in order to improve their work.
- Effective assessment procedures are embedded into Religious Education which inform the teacher of the level at which pupils are working. These are not always accurate and staff need a clearer idea of attainment at each level.

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

- The role of Religious Education coordinator is given very high priority within the school which ensures that Religious Education has a high profile. She is very passionate about her role and provides valuable support for staff to ensure that they feel well equipped to deliver quality experiences for pupils.
- Leaders have a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for development, founded on sound observations, and have drawn up a comprehensive action plan to ensure that the school is continually improving. An effective tracking system is in place and pupils are closely monitored to ensure they make progress. The coordinator is well informed by current developments in Religious Education which is disseminated regularly to staff to support and improve teaching.
- The programme for Religious Education 'Come and See' has been successfully introduced into the curriculum but not all staff have yet accessed training. This needs to be done to ensure more effective continuity and progression in pupils' learning.
- Good links are forged with other agencies, their partner school, the local and wider community and the local Catholic church to provide a range of enrichment activities to promote pupils' learning and engagement. The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference well.
- Sacramental preparation is well embedded and in line with diocesan policy. The school liaises effectively with the parish to deliver school's part of the programme.
- Governors are regular visitors to school. 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.

2

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 Mary's RC Primary
Unique reference number	114265
Local authority	Durham
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.	
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