

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

School: St Robert's RC First School

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School URN: 122312

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Vivien Cunningham

Chair of Governors: Mrs Amy Boyle

Inspector: Mrs Christine Lynch

Date of Inspection: 5 & 6 April 2011

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.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Robert's First School is situated in a small town and it draws pupils from the town and surrounding rural areas and three parishes. It is smaller than average and the majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds with a few from other ethnic groups. The number of children eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average but the number with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Attainment on entry is above average.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll: 135

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 64%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 25%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 2%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 9%

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 15%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 15%

Staffing

Number of full time teachers: 5

Number of part time teachers: 2

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 50%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 50%

Percentage of learning time given to Religious Education:

FS	10%	Yr 3	10%
Yr 1	10%	Yr 4	10%
Yr 2	10%		

Parishes served by the school:

St Robert's of Newminster, Morpeth

St Aidan's, Ashington

St Bede's, Bedlington

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic education

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

MAIN FINDINGS

St Robert's is a good Catholic school with many outstanding features. The dedicated acting headteacher, senior leaders and governors are totally committed to the ethos and mission of Catholic Education. Excellent relationships and communication are a key strength of the school which foster the development of a community in which inclusion is given a high priority. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good due to the accurate self-assessment that has led to clear, challenging targets and relevant priorities. All areas from the last inspection have been addressed. St Robert's School is held in very high regard by parents and the parish community.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are happy to come to school. From above average starting points all pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and standards of attainment are above average. Good progress continues to the end of Year 4 but some more able pupils are not given enough challenging activities to enable them to attain higher levels of attainment. Pupils' level of participation in prayer and liturgical life of the school is good and they are continuing to develop skills in preparing and leading prayer and collective worship. The promotion of pupils' spiritual and moral development is good.

The school provides a good Catholic education. Good teaching and learning in Religious Education is promoting positive attitudes enabling all pupils to make progress. The Religious Education provided is varied and is meeting the needs of most pupils and raising standards. However, some more able pupils in Key Stage 2 are not achieving their full potential because tasks do not enable them to reach higher levels of attainment. Assessment and academic guidance is good. Monitoring and tracking systems ensure that all pupils make at least good progress. Collective worship is good and shows signs of further development. Staff are excellent role models for the pupils and offer a variety of prayer and worship opportunities.

The acting headteacher ensures that all pupils are well cared for, respected as individuals and are motivated to make progress. Leadership has a clear sense of direction and purpose in Religious Education which is recognised as the core subject of the curriculum. The Religious Education co-ordinator is highly committed and central to the continuing development of the Catholic life of the school and Religious Education. Professional development of all staff is a high priority, resulting in competent staff who, are committed to raising standards. Leaders and managers form excellent partnerships which benefit pupils' well-being and their promotion of community cohesion is good. The governors of the school make a significant contribution to the school.

What the school needs to do to improve further:

Raise standards of attainment by:

- ensuring teachers are providing opportunities for pupils to achieve higher levels of attainment by providing more challenging tasks especially for more able pupils;
- using marking more effectively to ensure pupils know when they have met their targets and can identify the next steps to improve their learning.

PUPILS

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

2

All pupils are enthusiastic and interested in their Religious Education lessons, are keen to participate and ask searching questions about their learning. Pupils' achievement in Religious Education is good. At the end of Year 2 and Year 4 standards are above average and data indicates signs of further improvement. Pupils make good progress from their good starting points in Reception. The very large majority of pupils achieve Level 2 by the end of Year 2 and Level 3 by the end of Year 4. However, some more able pupils are not offered enough challenging opportunities to enable them to attain higher levels. Pupils are given targets but marking does not always let pupils know how to improve their work. Tracking and monitoring throughout the year show that pupils' attainment is improving steadily. There is no significant difference between groups of learners as a result of the intervention and planned support provided during the lessons.

Pupils' contribution to the Catholic life of the school is excellent. Pupils are eager to take on roles of responsibility, such as during assemblies and Masses and when they are called upon to be buddies. The pupils take their responsibilities very seriously. The School Council has a strong voice and has influenced decisions about creating a Peace Garden for the whole community. Pupils have a very strong sense of belonging and their caring attitude permeates the school. Everyone in the school community is valued and has a vital role to play. Pupils speak confidently when expressing their own beliefs and are understanding and respectful of those beliefs different to their own. They understand the importance of key celebrations throughout the liturgical year. Pupils have a strong sense of fairness and they see forgiveness as an important part of their lives.

Pupils' response and contribution to collective worship is good. Pupils are eager to take an active part in collective worship and most are now confident to take an active role during worship and liturgies. This is an area that is being developed even further to ensure pupils become highly skilled at planning and leading collective worship. Pupils have a good understanding of the religious seasons and feasts and they act with reverence and show respect to their fellow pupils. They are at ease when praying formally and informally and there is a peaceful, calm atmosphere that is based on mutual respect for each others' beliefs and understanding. Collective worship contributes significantly to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils.

PROVISION

How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education

2

Teaching and learning is good overall with some outstanding features. The majority of teaching is effective and ensures that pupils are interested in their learning and making good progress. Some teachers have a strong subject knowledge which inspires and challenges the pupils and thus contributes to their good progress. Pupils are keen to learn, concentrate well and achieve well, however, they do not fully understand when they have met their targets or how to improve their learning. Good and imaginative use is made of resources, including technology to maximise learning. Good support is provided by other adults to ensure that pupils' needs are met during the lessons.

The school's assessment and monitoring procedures in Religious Education are good. They are regular, detailed and accurate and information for all groups of pupils is used to ensure that all pupils make good progress and achieve well. Assessment is used to set targets for all pupils and progress towards these targets is monitored systematically and frequently. However, pupils are not involved in regular self-assessment and marking does not always let pupils know how to improve their work. Some more able pupils are not offered appropriate tasks and activities to enable them to achieve higher levels of attainment.

The Religious Education curriculum meets the needs of most pupils well and ensures that they are prepared for the next stage in their lives. It is enriched through a range of imaginative and well planned activities that use the expertise within and beyond the school. The Religious Education curriculum provides good opportunities for and impacts on the pupils' spiritual and moral development. Extra-curricular opportunities are varied, have a high take up and are much enjoyed by the pupils. The curriculum offered fully meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.

The quality of collective worship provided by the school is good and it ensures that the spiritual needs of all pupils are met well. It is fully inclusive, reflective and well planned enabling pupils to take an active part. Staff are ensuring that pupils are becoming more confident and skilled in planning and leading acts of collective worship. Prayer is an integral part of the school day and there is a range of formal and informal opportunities which reflects the religious diversity among pupils well. Parents, governors and parishioners are encouraged to attend class Masses and liturgical services. Staff and governors regularly review and plan improvements to the school's provision.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School

1

The school's leadership is outstanding at promoting and developing the Catholic life of the school. Their deep commitment and passion are a source of inspiration for the whole community. The Catholic mission of the school and the spiritual and moral development of pupils are priorities and this is reflected in the school improvement plan, self-evaluation form and other documents. Self-evaluation at all levels within the school is a reflection of rigorous monitoring, analysis and challenge which leads to well targeted planning and actions taken by the school, working closely with key partners. Staff training has ensured an understanding of and a commitment to the strong Catholic ethos. As a result, pupils understand the school's mission and are supportive and actively involved.

The monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education by the leaders and managers is outstanding. The subject leader and the acting headteacher have ensured that staff have a strong understanding of their role and the mission of Religious Education in the school. There is a strong commitment to raise standards through high quality teaching and learning. This has led to an excellent understanding of the curriculum by all and has enabled pupils to continue to achieve good progress. Monitoring at all levels provides a base for continued improvements and this leads to well targeted planning and actions taken by the school. As a result, outcomes in Religious Education for most pupils are good.

The work of the governors is outstanding. They make a significant contribution to the work and Catholic dimension of the school. They have the expertise to meet the school's needs and they are well organised and influential. Governors discharge their statutory and canonical duties effectively. They are fully involved in evaluating the school and ensure stakeholders views feature prominently when priorities and targets for improvement in Religious Education are set. They are very supportive of leaders and staff, are constructive and show determination in challenging and supporting the school. They are well informed and understand the school's performance in Religious Education and what to do to raise standards even further.

The school participates fully and actively in developing and implementing a variety of partnership activities. The leaders and managers value partnerships as providing spiritual and cultural opportunities for the pupils. The acting headteacher ensures that links are well established with other schools, the local Catholic Middle School, the parish, local organisations and world-wide organisations. These activities make an excellent contribution to pupils' achievement and well-being and, as a result, pupils benefit significantly and develop exceptionally well in a number of areas which the school alone could not provide.

Leaders and managers promote community cohesion well. There is a common sense of belonging where everyone values difference, diversity and equal opportunities. Pupils have the opportunity to explore other religions and develop relationships with people from other backgrounds. Pupils have a real sense of understanding and respect for all. Relationships between pupils are positive and they have a true sense of friendship. The Religious Education curriculum teaches respect, rights and responsibility. Provision for collective worship celebrates, reflects and respects religious diversity within the school and local communities. The school has a clear sense of the global dimension and has extensive links through the Comenius Project with Belgium, Spain, Germany and Lithuania.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1 **Outstanding** Grade 2 **Good** Grade 3 **Satisfactory** Grade 4 **Unsatisfactory**

Overall effectiveness	2
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	2
How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups	2
• how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	2
❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
❖ pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education	2
• the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school	1
• how well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship	2
How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education	2
• the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	2
• the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education	2
• the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
• the quality of collective worship provided by the school	2
How effective leaders and managers are in developing 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 and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
• how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
• 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	1
• how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well being	2
• how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion.	2