

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION  
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

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**School:** St Joseph's RCVA Primary School  
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**School URN:** 108508  
**Headteacher:** Miss Elaine Mathews  
**Chair of Governors:** Mrs Pat Dick  
**Inspector:** Mrs Eileen Lawson  
**Date of Inspection:** 20/21 October 2009

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. Joseph's is a smaller than average primary school situated in an area of high deprivation to the west of the centre of Newcastle and serves the parish of St. Joseph's, Benwell. It has an increasingly diverse population with just over half of the pupils from a white British background. The remainder are from minority ethnic groups mainly Asian, African and a small number of asylum seekers and economic migrants from European and Middle East backgrounds. The percentage of pupils whose first language is not English is much higher than average. The proportion eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.

## **FACTUAL INFORMATION**

### **Pupil Catchment:**

Number of pupils on roll: 194  
Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 45%  
Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 18%  
Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 10%  
Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 27%  
Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 42%  
Percentage of pupils with special needs: 10%

### **Staffing**

Number of full time teachers: 9  
Number of part time teachers: 1  
Percentage of Catholic teachers: 83%  
Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 33%

### **Percentage of learning time given to RE:**

|      |     |      |     |
|------|-----|------|-----|
| FS   | 10% | Yr 4 | 10% |
| Yr 1 | 10% | Yr 5 | 10% |
| Yr 2 | 10% | Yr 6 | 10% |
| Yr 3 | 10% |      |     |

### **Parishes served by the school:**

St Joseph's, Benwell, Newcastle upon Tyne.

**Overall Effectiveness**

2

**Capacity for sustained improvement**

2

## **MAIN FINDINGS**

St Joseph's is a good school with outstanding features. There is a shared vision which promotes high expectations of all members of the school community. Total commitment to the mission and ethos of Catholic education permeates this community where continuous improvement in every aspect of school life is paramount. Excellent relationships are a key strength of the school. The school's capacity for sustained improvement in all areas is good because its accurate and ongoing self-evaluation has resulted in clear challenging targets and appropriate priorities. All priorities for improvement since the last inspection have been addressed and the school is continuously striving to improve standards.

Pupils are delighted to come to school and have positive attitudes to learning. All pupils make good progress from exceptionally low starting points although the standards attained are low. They benefit greatly from the range of opportunities offered to contribute to the Catholic life of the school. The level of participation in the prayer and liturgical life of the school is good and the pupils are developing independent skills in preparing and leading prayer and Collective Worship. Their spiritual and moral development is good.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education is good which enables pupils to make good progress. Assessment, monitoring and tracking procedures which are continually under review and development, impact positively on pupil progress. The Religious Education curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of most pupils and is focused on raising standards. However, some pupils, especially the more able pupils, are not achieving their full potential because the activities set do not enable them to reach the higher levels. The quality of Collective Worship is good. Staff are excellent role models for the pupils and offer a variety of opportunities for prayer and worship.

The excellent leadership of the headteacher ensures that all pupils are exceptionally well cared for, respected as individuals and are motivated to make good progress. She has established an effective senior management team who work well together to strive for continuous improvement for the Catholic life of the school and for improvement in standards. Professional development of all staff is a high priority resulting in competent staff, committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve their potential. The Religious Education co-ordinator is central to the effective development of the Catholic life and Religious Education.

### **What the school needs to do to improve further**

In order to improve standards of attainment the school needs to –

- ensure that more appropriate assessment activities allow all pupils, but especially the more able to achieve a higher level of attainment;

- develop the current principles and practices of Assessing Pupil Progress in line with new diocesan guidelines for assessing Religious Education;
- extend assessment for learning strategies in Religious Education to include peer marking.

## **PUPILS**

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

2

Most pupils enjoy Religious Education. They speak enthusiastically and have very positive attitudes towards their learning. From extremely low starting points on entry to school, all pupils, including boys and girls, Catholics and those other than Catholic make good progress throughout Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and this continues in Key Stage 2. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who enter school at other than the normal yearly intake make good progress because their needs are accurately identified and support is carefully adapted to meet them. However, pupils with higher abilities are capable of progressing further and attaining higher. Pupils are becoming increasingly religiously literate and their knowledge, skills and understanding are developing well according to their age and capability. They discuss their faith confidently and can talk about how religion, belief and spirituality impact on their lives. However, standards of attainment overall are low. At the end of Key Stage 1 standards are low with the vast majority of attainment being at Level 1. By the end of Key Stage 2, a minority of pupils achieve level 4, which is the expected level of attainment, but for the majority of pupils attainment is low. The school is devising strategies to raise the attainment of all pupils and is developing more appropriate activities for higher ability pupils.

Pupils make a good contribution to the Catholic life of the school and obtain much benefit from it. They willingly take on responsibilities and participate in activities within and beyond the classroom which they acknowledge does help them to become better people. They are reflective and enquiring and understand that religious belief and spiritual values are important for many people. They show interest in the religious life of others, are comfortable when expressing their own beliefs and respect religious objects in the school. They understand the importance of key celebrations in the liturgical year and in the parish community. They are considerate to others and respond to the needs of people beyond the school. Pupils understand the need for forgiveness and have a good understanding of what is right and wrong.

Pupils' response to and participation in Collective Worship is good. They act reverently and are keen to take part in, plan and lead prayer and liturgies. They sing joyfully, reflect silently and know a variety of ways of praying. They are at ease when praying with their school community and appreciate what is taking place. They have a good understanding of the religious seasons and feasts and are becoming skilled in the use of scripture, religious artefacts, hymns and other forms of prayer. Collective Worship contributes positively to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. They show respect for each other and understand that some have different beliefs and attitudes to spirituality.

## PROVISION

### How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

2

Teaching is good. A range of teaching styles, good questioning techniques, clear explanations, well-paced lessons and good use of ICT ensure that all pupils are consistently interested in their learning and make good progress. Effectively planned lessons build on prior learning and meet the needs of most pupils. However, pupils' activities are not differentiated enough to enable all pupils, especially the more able, to achieve higher levels of attainment. Teachers have strong subject knowledge which inspires and challenges most pupils and contributes to their good progress. Support staff are effectively deployed. Pupils are provided with feedback both orally and through quality marking which informs how well they have done and what they need to do improve further.

Effective assessment procedures are well established and give a clear and accurate picture of pupil progress and achievement and are becoming more focused on ensuring different groups of pupils achieve equally well. Leaders and teachers use this information to good effect ensuring continuous improvement. However, assessment procedures need to be further developed to ensure higher levels of attainment. The school has identified plans to introduce the principles and practices of Assessing Pupil Progress in line with the new diocesan assessment guidelines. Regular assessment, including pupil self-assessment ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The school has also identified plans to develop peer marking in order to enable pupils to achieve higher standards of attainment. The school is continuing to develop target setting for its pupils and progress towards achieving these targets is monitored systematically and frequently. However, the targets need to be more challenging in order to raise standards of attainment in Religious Education.

The Religious Education curriculum is creatively adapted to meet the needs of most pupils. It is enriched through a variety of imaginative and well planned strategies which are stimulating and memorable. These reflect the diversity of the school's population. Extra-curricular activities are varied, have a good take up and are much enjoyed. The Religious Education curriculum provides good opportunities for and impacts positively on pupils' spiritual and moral development. The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference well.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good and ensures that the spiritual needs of all the pupils are well met. It is fully inclusive, reflective and well planned enabling pupils to take an active part. Staff regularly review and plan improvements and ensure that pupils are becoming skilled in preparing and leading acts of worship. The school recognises that this is an area for continued development. Pupils with different beliefs are encouraged to share their practices and customs with peers resulting in a respect for each other's beliefs and practices. Prayer is central to the life of the school and this is demonstrated by the way staff and pupils pray together. There are a range of formal and informal opportunities for prayer and pupils enjoy the responsibility of being a 'prayer leader'. Attendance by families, parish, governors and volunteers is encouraged.

# LEADERS AND MANAGERS

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

2

Leaders and managers are outstanding at promoting the Catholic life of the school. The Catholic mission of the school is at the heart of all school life and pupils' spiritual and moral development are central to the school's vision. The deep commitment, drive and energy of the headteacher and senior leaders are an inspiration to the whole school community. Self-evaluation at all levels within the school is a coherent reflection of rigorous monitoring, thorough analysis and self-challenge. It ensures continuous improvement in all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. High quality staff training, induction procedures and systems for performance management have ensured an awareness, understanding and commitment to the very strong Catholic ethos. As a result pupils have a high level of understanding of the school's mission and are actively involved in shaping and supporting it.

The monitoring and evaluation of the provision for Religious Education are good. Leaders ensure that monitoring, assessment and tracking systems are in place and they are impacting increasingly positively on pupils' learning, progress and standards. They accurately inform areas of strength and development and contribute to the good capacity for improvement. Plans are in place to incorporate the newly introduced diocesan guidelines into current systems in order to raise standards of attainment. The efficient co-ordinator has high expectations, keeps staff well informed and is very supportive enabling staff to strive to raise standards. Detailed, well-targeted plans which are constantly reviewed are in place and strategies to effect improvement implemented effectively, resulting in continuously improving outcomes for pupils.

Governors provide effective challenge and support regarding the Catholic life of the school. They are extremely committed, have a good understanding of the schools' strengths and areas for development and put the well-being and development of the whole child at the centre of their work. Governors discharge their statutory and canonical duties well and have a good understanding of the challenges faced by the school. They play an active part in planning for continuous improvement, showing determination in challenging and supporting the school in order to address areas for development. They are actively involved in the school community and have very positive relationships with staff, pupils and their families. Governors understand the school's performance in Religious Education and know what needs to be done to raise standards.

Leaders and managers effectively develop partnerships with other providers and organisations. The school is involved in a wide range of partnership activities which impact significantly on pupils' achievement and well-being and to the Catholic life of the school. The dedicated headteacher ensures that links are well established with other Catholic primary schools, the diocese, the parish and local organisations to provide opportunities which enable pupils and staff to enjoy, achieve and develop well. Staff training is often shared with other schools. The school works closely with local Catholic high schools to access a range of professional development and curriculum enrichment activities.

Leaders' and managers' promotion of community cohesion is good. The school is a highly inclusive community with a clear, shared vision and a strong sense of belonging. Leaders respect difference, value diversity and ensure equal opportunities for all. Pupils from different backgrounds and religious beliefs are given the opportunity to work together enabling them to

respect and celebrate difference. They are developing an understanding of the common good and a commitment to their global responsibilities. Collective Worship is inclusive and each one's spiritual and religious identity is respected. The Religious Education curriculum promotes attitudes of respect and tolerance for all faiths and those with none.

## SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

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

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The school's capacity for sustained improvement</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| • how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education   | <b>3</b> |
| ❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress  | <b>2</b> |
| ❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress  | <b>2</b> |
| ❖ pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education  | <b>4</b> |
| • the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school   | <b>2</b> |
| • how well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>How effective the provision is for Catholic Education</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| • the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education  | <b>2</b> |
| • the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education  | <b>2</b> |
| • the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs  | <b>2</b> |
| • the quality of Collective Worship provided by the school  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| • 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   | <b>1</b> |
| • how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils  | <b>2</b> |
| • 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 | <b>2</b> |
| • how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and wellbeing   | <b>2</b> |
| • how effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion.  | <b>2</b> |