



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Bede's Catholic Primary School, Darlington

URN: 138253

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Malcom McMahon, Archbishop of Liverpool and Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle on:

Date: 17-18 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....

2

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.....

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education.....

2

Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....

2

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference



The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop



The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- There is a strong and effective partnership between the school, parish, and parents, which contributes exceptionally well to pupils' spiritual formation.
- The school environment is an attractive, distinctively Catholic space that celebrates the dignity of every community member and inspires prayer and reflection.
- Pupils enjoy religious education, work well in lessons and can confidently articulate what they have learnt.
- Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school and all pupils from a young age are reverent and respectful.

What the school needs to improve:

- Provide greater challenge in religious education lessons so that increased progress is made for all groups of pupils, ensuring that greater depth and effective questioning enables all pupils, and especially the more able, to extend their learning.
- Ensure that teachers have high expectations, are confident in their subject knowledge and use assessment information to plan challenging activities which build upon prior learning and provides information to pupils about how to improve their work through consistent feedback.
- Improve opportunities for pupils to independently plan, lead and evaluate prayer and liturgy so they undertake liturgical ministries with confidence, understanding and skill.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

There is an inclusive and welcoming Catholic culture at St. Bede's School which is driven by the mission statement, 'Love one another as I have loved you'. This is well understood, lived, and loved by the entire community. Pupils feel a sense of belonging because of the strong ethos of welcome that leaders and staff have nurtured, reflecting the teachings of Christ in a very practical way. Pupils are respectful and kind towards each other. They have a good understanding of what it means to belong to a Catholic school community and take advantage of the opportunities offered to contribute to the Catholic life of the school. They fully embrace the opportunities to take on leadership roles such as Mini-Vinnies and Well-being Buddies and say they feel valued as a result. Pupils take on these leadership roles within prayer and school events such as the Advent and Lenten markets with great enthusiasm and pride. Through their actions of supporting and promoting charities such as CAFOD, the Salvation Army, Macmillan Cancer Care and Coats for Calais, pupils demonstrate their good understanding and commitment to the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching.

St. Bede's School is a truly supportive community, valuing all and ensuring that everyone is welcomed in a spirit of hospitality. Pupils and their families feel well valued and cared for because all of the staff are deeply committed to treating everyone with dignity and respect. Pastoral care for pupils and their families is a priority of the school. The school provides a high level of pastoral support. One parent commented, 'This school is like one big family where we all look after each other', and another said, 'We appreciate what all staff do for our children, it is a real partnership between home and school'. Parents value the opportunity to join in the regular liturgies to which they are invited, especially the recently introduced opportunities for

them to 'Stay and Pray'. The learning environment across school is a reflection of its Catholic mission and identity and is evidenced through displays, artefacts, and the creation of sacred spaces in all classrooms. The recently developed prayer garden is a valued space in school which both staff and pupils can access as a place of personal and spiritual reflection. The provision for relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) is well met and in line with the statutory and diocesan requirements.

All leaders have a clear vision for the Catholic life of the school and a clear understanding of the role of the school in the mission of the Church. They have high expectations for the continuing development of Catholic life and a very clear picture of the school's role in the promotion of Catholic values throughout the community. The development of Catholic Social Teaching through the wider curriculum is effective. The school has successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers. Leaders truly embrace and encourage parents as the first educators of children. Parents speak of the school with enthusiasm, have a good understanding of the school's mission and are strong in supporting that mission for their children. Leaders at all levels provide good role models for parents and staff and promote a caring ethos in school reflecting Gospel values. The governors make a significant contribution to St. Bede's school. They are ambitious for its continuous development, very supportive of the schools' mission and are actively involved in its evaluation, whilst offering challenge and support.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

2

Pupils are developing secure knowledge, understanding and the skills that reflect the learning required by the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory 2012*. They can articulate what they have learnt confidently, showing an awareness of key concepts. Pupil outcomes across the school are mostly good because pupils recognise the importance of religious education and enjoy their lessons. This is evident in their responses during lessons where pupils are motivated and keen to take part. Religious education lessons effectively support pupils to know more and remember more; pupils demonstrate this particularly well through their oral contributions. Pupils have a good knowledge of scripture and can interpret how it shapes their own daily lives, though this is not always reflected in their written work. They have positive attitudes, work well in lessons applying themselves to the tasks set and are becoming increasingly more religiously literate. As a consequence, pupils across all age groups demonstrate good behaviour for learning. Where more creative learning methods are used well, pupils demonstrate their understanding of new knowledge, subsequently showing improvement over time. However, this is inconsistent in some classes. Whilst some pupils talk confidently about how their work is assessed, they struggle to articulate what they need to do to improve their work.

Teachers generally demonstrate good subject knowledge. Links are increasingly being made between religious education and other areas of the curriculum, including links with Catholic Social Teaching. Lessons are usually planned around pupils' prior knowledge. However some pupils, especially the more able, do not make sufficient progress in lessons because work is not sufficiently challenging. Teachers ask questions which help them determine where pupils are in their learning journey, though they do not always ask questions that require responses

at a greater level of depth. Tasks given to pupils are sometimes supported too much, therefore not always allowing pupils to achieve their full potential. Teachers have responded well to training to develop feedback and marking, resulting in a more consistent system across school, however this is not yet fully embedded. Not all pupils fully understand how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve. Good quality resources, including other adults, are generally used effectively to optimise learning. Pupils with additional needs are well supported with good support offered by teaching assistants, particularly for those with most challenging educational needs.

The leadership of religious education is strong. The acting head teacher has ensured that religious education programmes and resources deliver the curriculum aims set out in the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* and that the required amount of time is given to religious education. She is extremely enthusiastic about her role, deeply committed to raising standards and has a very clear vision for religious education. A programme of monitoring across the school has been developed and introduced but this is not yet fully developed and evaluated for impact. All staff, particularly the most recently appointed, benefit from the excellent support given to them to secure their subject knowledge, resulting in outcomes that generally match pupils' abilities. The acting head teacher has a very good understanding of the schools' strengths and areas for further development and is taking effective action to secure further improvements. All findings from monitoring are shared with the governing body on a regular basis. The governors have a good understanding of the schools' strengths and areas for further development and are taking effective action to secure further improvements. The governors are very involved and are thorough in their challenge and evaluation of the school. They are highly ambitious and relentlessly strive for the very best outcomes possible.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

Pupils enjoy the varied opportunities they have to participate in prayer. They show high levels of reverence and respect and participate wholeheartedly by answering questions, joining in with responses, singing enthusiastically and very respectfully using sign language during the singing of the 'Hail Mary'. There is a calm and peaceful ethos which pervades the school, and this is reflected in the pupils' excellent behaviour and consideration shown during prayer and liturgy. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the liturgical year and can confidently make connections between the cycle of prayer and liturgy and various seasonal parish and school traditions. Themes for prayer are often reinforced in lessons, ensuring all pupils understand them and can apply them to their lives and the lives of others. Pupils are very reflective, especially the younger pupils who can describe how their experience of closeness to Jesus in liturgy and prayer helps them to live out His teachings in their lives. As pupils progress through the school, they are beginning to develop their capacity to plan and lead prayer in their class. They take advantage of opportunities to do this using the four-part structure of welcome, sharing of the Word, reflection on the Word and mission. They are developing their knowledge, understanding and confidence in leading worship and in making links between Gospel messages and daily life.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school and make a good contribution to the moral and spiritual needs of the pupils. Praying together is part of the daily experience for all pupils and staff which has a positive impact on the school's sense of community. Pupils have regular high-quality spiritual experiences through assemblies, liturgies, Mass, Stations of the Cross, and pupil-led acts of worship; all demonstrating the centrality and embedded daily rhythm of prayer to pupils' lived experience at St. Bede's. There is a clear policy for prayer and

liturgy which is planned and resourced to reflect the liturgical year. The use of carefully chosen music, artwork and visual images around the school help to provide engaging acts of worship across the whole school. Scripture passages are central to prayer and liturgy and are chosen to reflect the liturgical season, enabling all pupils to actively participate. Sacred focal points are evident in all classrooms providing further encouragement for independent reflection and prayer and provide pupils with stimulus for thought and reflection. Parents are appreciative of the prayer opportunities offered for themselves and their children. One parent commented, 'The school supports everyone and has given my child the strength and confidence to play a part in leading prayer and sharing love with everyone'.

Leaders display a good understanding of different ways to pray and are models of good practice for staff and pupils in planning and providing quality acts of worship. They are dedicated to ensuring that all pupils experience an enriching Catholic education that provides excellent formation. Their dedication and commitment are instrumental in the drive to provide high quality prayer throughout the school. All staff are provided with opportunities for training that include liturgical formation and new staff say they are well supported in the planning and leadership of prayer and liturgy. The governors are thorough in their challenge and evaluation of the school and ensure that continuous improvement is ongoing and given the highest priority. They are proud of the strong links to the Church and fully support the school in its core mission. Both governors and senior leaders ensure that Gospel values are unashamedly the foundation of all aspects of school life.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Bede's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	138253
Full postal address of the school	Kingsway, Darlington. Co. Durham, DL1 3ES
School phone number	01325 466411
Name of head teacher or principal	Lucy Flaherty
Chair of governing board	Gerry Mackowski
School Website	www.stbedesdarlington.bhcet.org.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Trustees	Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	June 2015
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Elaine White

Lead inspector

Lisa Hoey

Team inspector

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement