

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

School: St Mary's RC Primary School

Address: Birch Road,
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School URN: 114261

Headteacher: Mrs Jane Weatherall

Chair of Governors: Mrs Victoria Lowe

Lead Inspector: Karen Holmes

Team Inspector:

Date of Inspection 27 - 28 November

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a smaller than average primary school set within the small market town of Barnard Castle in the rural area of Teesdale. The school draws pupils from a wide geographical area serving the parishes of St Mary's Barnard Castle, St Osmund's Gainford, St Aidan's Middleton-in-Teesdale and Wycliffe in Yorkshire. There are 89 pupils on roll, predominantly white British. The level of deprivation is below national average. The percentage of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.

Pupil Catchment

Number of pupils on roll:	89
Planned Admission Number of Pupils:	15
Percentage of pupils baptised RC:	52%
Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations:	48%
Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths:	0%
Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation:	0%
Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups:	2.4%
Percentage of pupils with special needs:	21%

Staffing

Full time teachers:	5
Part time teachers:	1
Percentage of Catholic teachers:	60%
Percentage of teachers with CCRS:	40%

Percentage of learning time given to Religious Education

FS	10%
Year 1	10%
Year 2	10%
Year 3	10%
Year 4	10%
Year 5	10%
Year 6	10%

Parishes served by the school

St Mary's, Barnard Castle

St Osmund's, Gainford

St Aidan's, Middleton-in-Teesdale

Wycliffe in Yorkshire.

INSPECTION JUDGMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

1

CATHOLIC LIFE

1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

2

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

KEY FINDINGS

- St Mary's RC primary is an outstanding school where every child is valued through a strong sense of shared mission across the whole community. The Catholic Life of the school embraces everyone and is very inclusive. The school provides an excellent understanding of what it means to be Catholic and is valued highly by parishioners.
- Pupils' progress, attainment and understanding of the importance of Religious Education is outstanding. Pupils are passionate in their approach to Religious Education and understand how it can shape their lives. The children develop a strong understanding of what it means to be Catholic through exciting teaching and a variety of experiences.
- The Catholic Life of St Mary's is outstanding. Children take full advantage of the opportunities offered to them and use their talents well in the service of others. They have a strong sense of justice and are quick to congratulate and commiserate with others. Each pupil is cared for and nurtured by all staff in their mission to educate the whole child.
- Collective Worship is good. Children act with reverence and are at ease, joining in prayers confidently. It is not outstanding because children do not have sufficient opportunities throughout school to take the initiative in leading prayer and worship to ensure that it is met with palpable enthusiasm and that it is of the highest quality.

WHAT THE SCHOOL NEEDS TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

To improve further the school needs to:

- Improve the quality of Collective Worship by:
 - Providing and developing further opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in planning and leading worship;
 - Developing progression for children, appropriate to their age, to enable them to plan and deliver effective worship.
- Continue to raise progress and attainment in Religious Education by:
 - Ensuring that pupils are aware of their targets and how to improve their work;
 - Ensure consistency in marking so that pupils know what the next steps in learning are.

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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Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic Life of the school. They live and breathe their mission statement which they were fully involved in creating. They are highly appreciative of their school and feel that it helps them to 'shape their lives' and that 'God is at the centre'. They have a thorough understanding of what a Catholic education provides for them and they are keen participants in the life of the community. They are justifiably proud of the Catholic tradition of the school and are very knowledgeable about their faith. They have a strong sense of self-worth and appreciate how well the school helps them to be better people. Through effective communication of the school's mission they realise that they have talents to share with others and they readily take on positions of responsibility throughout the community: designing the Mary Garden for the benefit of the community; as buddies for the younger children; and in their fund raising for needy causes, both locally and globally. Prayer Partners from St Mary's regularly pray with and for the children which helps all pupils to feel part of a Catholic community and experience God's love. Pupils in years five and six enjoy a retreat day annually and participate in all parish and diocesan activities, even holding the parish fair in the school. An effective Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme ensures that pupils develop understanding appropriate to their age and understanding.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. The mission of the school is clearly understood by the whole community and is very much a shared vision. Pupils' behaviour and attitude clearly reflect the aims of the mission and all staff are involved and fully committed to striving for excellence in all areas of Catholic Life. The strong sense of community is tangible within the school. The school is a happy and prayerful community with high priority given to sacred spaces in classrooms and informative and stimulating displays around the school. Thoughtful assemblies and liturgies provide the chance for deep thought and pupils' spiritual and moral development. Behaviour is exemplary and children show respect and a commitment to being the best that they can be in all areas of their lives. They know how important it is to 'live like the apostles - Jesus taught us how to shape our lives and carry on His work'. Because of the strong PSHE curriculum the pupils have an excellent understanding of who they are. They understand the importance of fairness and forgiveness; a strong caring atmosphere exists between children and staff.

Leaders and managers are outstanding in promoting the provision for the Catholic Life of the school. The Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher have a strong vision for the school which is articulated through their actions. The Gospel values underpin the drive to create the stimulating and caring environment that exists in the school. Leaders and managers, including the Governing body, ensure that the school is a welcoming, inclusive community. This ensures that all pupils are exceptionally well cared for and encouraged to be ambitious and confident. Effective leadership provides a clear direction for the Catholic Life of the school, ensuring that expectations and morale are extremely high. Professional development is given high priority so that all staff feel confident and skilled in providing the best possible outcomes for pupils and a commitment to developing the Catholic Life of the school. Leaders and managers carefully nurture community involvement in the school with great success - they promote the Catholic Life of the school in every way. Parents and carers feel very much a part of the school and parishioners comment on the Catholic ethos of the school which is visible in how the children behave and treat one another both in school and in the parish. An active governing body has a significant impact on school life acting as a 'critical friend' evaluating the Catholic Life of the school and taking part in all areas of school life. The governors are visible in their governor surgeries giving their time generously to the good of the school. They are well informed and highly active promoting the school in the parish.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

2

- 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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Pupils' response to and participation in the school's Collective Worship is good. They have a good knowledge of what worship is for and can articulate their thoughts and feelings with reverence. The children act with reverence and take part willingly in a wide variety of forms of worship. Pupils are confident when praying in class and whole school worship, reflecting in silence appropriately. The older children are involved in the planning and delivery of their class worship and do so very confidently but the school recognises that not all children are given that opportunity. Whole school worship is effective in linking God's word to our actions in daily life with all children participating comfortably. The formation of all types of Collective Worship is well embedded and the children have a good knowledge of the importance of different types of worship. They have a good understanding of how the Word of God has relevance in their lives. Pupils develop a good understanding of the liturgical year, feasts and celebrations through a well-planned programme involving the whole community.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding - it plays a key part in every school celebration and enables the children to take part in a variety of different ways. The children clearly know what it means to reflect and to celebrate; to pray silently and to worship as a class or a whole school. The opportunities for prayer exist throughout the day both formally and informally with staff and children able to participate in a prayer group both indoors and outdoors in Mary's Garden. Prayer Journals are used throughout the school to enable the children to record their private prayers and intentions and are highly valued by the children. A wide range of resources and artefacts are used to enhance the spiritual experience provided for the children. Parents, parishioners and governors are regular visitors at the many opportunities provided by the school. Effective planning throughout the year provides for the many and varied stimulating opportunities for Collective Worship. The school's responsibility for Sacramental preparation is well embedded and the school takes every opportunity to celebrate and reinforce this.

Leaders and managers are outstanding in the way that they promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship. They demonstrate excellent knowledge and deliver high quality experiences for the pupils. Pupils enjoy the variety of worship that they receive and feel 'special' because it 'strengthens your belief in God and gives you belief in yourself'. Leaders and managers work tirelessly to help the children appreciate church traditions, promoting the Catholic mission of the school in ways that engage and stimulate the pupils. Recent training in liturgical dance is an asset in the planning and delivery 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 monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

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Pupils' ambition and commitment to their attainment in Religious Education is outstanding. Motivated and inspiring lessons fully engage the children and they feel that teachers make their learning in Religious Education interesting and fun. Although only 52% of the school are Catholic the attainment and progress for all children are above national expectations. Attainment is consistent and at the end of key stage one (KS1) a very large majority achieve level two (the standard expected of them) with some achieving level three. Good progress is maintained throughout key stage two (KS2) with all pupils achieving the level expected of them (level four) and some attaining level five. Pupils take great pride in their work and see their Religious Education books as very special - 'all lessons are linked to RE'. The pupils articulate their thoughts and feelings exceptionally well, 'school makes you a better person because it strengthens your belief in God'. They ask probing questions and are comfortable sharing their ideas with their peers. They are able to reflect and justify their beliefs identifying that Mary 'knows she will have a line of hard obstacles to overcome in her life'. Pupils concentrate well and work at a good pace in lessons. In key stage two there is excellent differentiation of tasks and success criteria to enable children to progress at their own level. Religious Education is seen as the core of who they are, influencing morals, manners and behaviour.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding. In all of the lessons observed there was good pace, probing questions, differentiation and accurate assessment of individual's abilities. Lively, motivated teaching and a variety of teaching styles ensure that the children make outstanding progress in all lessons observed. Teachers demonstrate good knowledge of individual children and relationships are excellent which provide a very supportive learning environment. Marking is dialogic which gives the children an opportunity to respond to the teacher's comments. In the best examples this was used well to identify next steps in learning but the school recognises that this is not used consistently in all classes. Teachers used resources particularly well to stimulate and motivate, planning excellent differentiated tasks and activities to enable all children to succeed. Challenge is well embedded into teaching and children show resilience when tackling their work. Expectations of work and behaviour are high and children are engaged and responsive. Previous knowledge is built upon effectively and good layered learning was evident in a year six lesson where children were able to hypothesise about why some Gospels do not have accounts of the Visitation. Pupils ask probing questions and provide detailed answers, thinking deeply about their responses.

Teacher knowledge enables the children to make excellent progress in their Religious Education. Lesson planning is detailed and builds upon previous learning, challenging those who need it but supporting others. While pupils have a general idea of class targets in Religious Education, individual targets would help the children identify their next steps in learning.

Leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education extremely well. The clear sense of purpose of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who is also the Religious Education coordinator are instrumental in improving teaching and learning in Religious Education. This is effectively communicated to all staff. The Religious Education curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, engaging and motivating through well planned lessons effective differentiation and well-targeted intervention. A range of activities and resources are used to increase the children's knowledge of diversity with success. The pupils recognise and understand similarities and differences with other faiths. Professional development for all staff is a high priority. Religious Education is a priority each year in the school improvement plan with the importance of exciting teaching and learning high on the agenda. Staff development is targeted to ensure that all staff are enthusiastic, confident and knowledgeable in their delivery of the RE curriculum. Lessons and work are carefully monitored by the Religious Education co-ordinator with data carefully tracked by the headteacher to ensure that all pupils make at least expected progress. The enthusiasm and drive of both have ensured that the attainment of all children in Religious Education is given high profile. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation with the Diocese and the Deanery Partnership ensures that the attainment and progress of all children is above national expectations.

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

2

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

2

The quality of provision for Collective Worship

1

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

	Pupil Outcomes	Provision	Leadership and Management	
Religious Education	1	1	1	1
Catholic Life	1	1	1	1
Collective Worship	2	1	1	2
	1	1	1	1