



St Stephen's RC Primary School

Goathland Avenue, Longbenton, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8FA

School Unique Reference Number: **108621**

Inspection dates:	22 – 23 November 2016
Lead inspector:	John Hattam

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Collective Worship:		Outstanding	1
Religious Education:		Outstanding	1

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Stephen's RC Primary School is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.
All senior leaders, staff, parents and governors have very high expectations and a shared vision for the personal and spiritual development of all pupils. The school is a beacon of hope in the community.
- The quality of Religious Education is outstanding.
Teachers have deep subject knowledge and are able to plan and deliver high quality lessons. Behaviour in lessons is exemplary. Children enjoy their learning and as a result make good progress over time.
- The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding.
Leaders have established 'best practice models' which have enabled pupils to take the initiative in leading Collective Worship. Opportunities for worship are rich and varied. The pupils' response to worship is both heartfelt and uplifting.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Stephen's is a smaller than average primary school, with 242 pupils on roll.
- The school is on a site shared with St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School, the design for which was inspired by the current executive headteacher.
- The number of pupils who are baptised Catholics has risen in recent years to 43%.
- The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average.
- The percentage of children who receive special educational needs support is above the national average.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Improve the Catholic Life of the school by:
 - Continuing to build and strengthen newly established links between the school and the parish of St Aidan's. Work with the newly appointed parish priest to mutually promote the work of the school and the parish so that both can consolidate their place in the community and work for the common good.
- Improve the quality of Religious Education by:
 - Ensuring that teachers new to Catholic education continue to receive high quality training from expert staff in order to support and strengthen subject knowledge.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF 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.
- 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 outstanding.

- The mission of the school is central to life at St Stephen's and is recited daily as part of the school prayer as well as being included in all acts of worship. School leaders have a clear and unwavering vision for all pupils which is rooted in the mission of the church, this vision is transmitted to the children who describe their actions as being "Guided by the word of God".
- Children, staff and parents say that being at St Stephen's has an impact on their lives which allows them to travel from the heart of their school out into the wider community to work for the common good.
- Pupils are filled with pride when they talk about their school. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, they provide a warm welcome to all visitors, and they are inclusive in their learning and in their play. They take full advantage of the many opportunities on offer to develop their own spirituality, they described visiting the 'Trail of Mercy' in the playground as a 'chance to talk quietly to God'.
- Pupils have many opportunities to act justly, they support the work of Care Connect who provide meals for the lonely at Christmas, they support the 5p Bus, CAFOD, as well as collecting money and goods for food banks and refugees in the local community.
- The school encourages the children to be outward looking and initiatives like 'sending a smile to you' and 'God's gift to others' are examples of this. The Catholic Life of the diocese has inspired the pupils to attend events like the diocesan festival with their families as well as a pilgrimage to Holy Island for children.

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

- The provision for the Catholic Life of the school has the highest priority at St Stephen's. All staff, parents and governors are involved in shaping and delivering the school mission.
- Through the work of the 'Ethos and Curriculum Committee' governors and school leaders ensure that there is an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable and needy in both policy and practice.
- The whole school community has worked hard, particularly since moving to the new site to promote the Catholic Life of the school. This can be seen in the efforts to make sustainable and fruitful links with the parish of St Aidan's.

- Parents describe St Stephen's as a "loving community where their children are safe and valued". They also said that initiatives like Wednesday Word is having a positive impact on the faith of their children and is helping families who are not regular church goers to gain a greater understanding of what it means to be a Catholic.
- St Stephen's has distinct Catholic character which is embodied in its central hub. This carefully designed and well-resourced prayerful space is the centre of Catholic Life and worship at St Stephen's. Inspirational gospel texts, religious artefacts and stained glass windows make this space sacred.
- Everyone at St Stephen's is encouraged to be a leader and take responsibility for promoting the highest standards of moral and ethical behaviour. As a result of strong leadership children are becoming leaders and in turn promoting the Catholic Life of the school through the work of the Mini Vinnies group in school.

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

- There is a deep sense of commitment of all leaders to the mission of the Catholic church. The executive headteacher and the deputy headteacher lead by example and act as a source of inspiration to the whole community. They are active and visible in school, parish and community ensuring that pupils are given the best possible experience in order to grow in faith and spirituality.
- School self-evaluation is rigorous and robust. This leads to well-planned and well-resourced, sustained school improvement. Governors are a key part of this process and are very active in the school community. They provide a significant level of challenge and are very proud of the live school improvement planning document.
- School and home work very closely together. Parents say that outstanding pastoral care and effective communication are key factors in the increasing popularity of the school among parents.
- Following the relocation of St Stephen's school within the parish of St Aidan's, senior leaders are acutely aware of the importance of developing closer links with the parish and the newly appointed parish priest.
- Governors are regular visitors to school, they attend Mass, Collective Worship, they talk to staff and observe teaching. Through first hand experiences they are able to accurately evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school. Governors are proud to be associated with St Stephen's, they are role models of service and they work tirelessly to promote the Catholic Life of St Stephen's.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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

- From a young age pupils are deeply reverent and respectful during Collective Worship. Pupils are engaged and clearly enjoy these varied experiences. They describe being inspired by prayer and value the opportunity for stillness in their lives. One child described Collective Worship as 'a time of peace'. Meditation is a key part of worship across school.
- Pupils enjoy the chance to lead worship and take great care to select the appropriate resources to engage their peers. They are aware that Collective Worship is a special time during the school day.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons and feasts. They talk with passion about making Collective Worship the best it can be. Parents describe being moved to tears by whole school acts of worship and school Mass.
- Pupils were able to name and say many of the formal prayers of the Church as well as talking enthusiastically about how they had used music and dance inspired by 'More Than Dance' group to enhance the quality of Collective Worship.
- Participation in Collective Worship is helping to shape the moral character and spiritual development of children at St Stephen's. Older children are able to make clear links between their acts of worship and the acts of worshippers from other faith traditions.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Worship and prayer is at the heart of this community. Praying together is part of the daily life of staff and pupils. Prayer tables and focal points in all classrooms are imaginatively resourced and carefully designed. Pupils enjoy selecting from a range of religious artefacts to enhance Collective Worship and they take pride in the way that they select and employ these resources.
- There is a well-planned programme of masses, liturgies and class worship that are matched to the needs and stage of development of all pupils. The pupils enjoy the variety of worshipping opportunities at St Stephen's.
- All staff are skilled at leading Collective Worship as a result of high quality training and support provided by the Religious Education coordinator. There is a clear progression of skills from early years through to year six. The school has invested significant sums of money from school budget to resource Collective Worship and as a result pupils have a

range of materials to choose from to enhance acts of worship.

- Families appreciate opportunities to be involved in Collective Worship and mass in school and also speak highly of resources like Wednesday Word and the Travelling Crib. Parents say that the high quality sacramental programme delivered by school staff has brought children and families together.

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

- The executive headteacher and deputy headteacher have an excellent knowledge of how to plan and deliver quality Collective Worship and ensure through training and support that this is shared with staff.
- The Religious Education coordinator who is also deputy headteacher is a skilled musician and as a result communal singing is of a very high standard across the whole school. This expertise serves to elevate the position of Collective Worship in school.
- Leaders across school have a thorough understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons, rites and symbols. As a result they are able to make worship both relevant and challenging, placing it in the context of the community the school serves.
- Leaders and governors have a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system for Collective Worship. Pupils and parents are consulted regularly about the quality of worship and through the Mini Vinnies and the school council pupils are able to give appropriate feedback.
- The Religious Education coordinator regularly monitors Collective Worship to ensure that the quality of worship is both outstanding and appropriate to the age and understanding of the children.
- Collective Worship is promoted throughout school with vibrant displays in classrooms and corridors which help pupils understand the essential elements, key roles and responsibilities that are found in outstanding Collective Worship.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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- 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 outstanding.

- Pupils demonstrate passion and commitment to their learning in Religious Education lessons. They take real pride in their work and are able to talk confidently about their learning and the progress they are making. Pupils were able to point to many pieces of work in their books that they were especially proud of.
- Pupils are able to evaluate their own work and respond to any feedback given. They say "I know how to improve my work because teachers help me".
- Religious Education is at the heart of the school curriculum, pupils acquire knowledge quickly and in depth, with older pupils linking their learning in Religious Education to other areas of learning.
- Pupils say they enjoy learning about other world faiths, parents commented about how much they had learned from their children about Judaism which had been covered earlier this term.
- Pupil's attainment has been higher than the diocesan averages for the past three years, there are no significant differences in attainment between groups of pupils' progress in lessons and over time.
- Behaviour for learning is outstanding. Pupils were attentive and engaged in all observed lessons, taking time to listen to the contributions of their peers.
- Written work observed in books during the inspection was of a very high standard, teachers have high expectations and work tirelessly to help all groups of children achieve.

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

- The majority of teaching observed during the inspection was outstanding and never less than good. Teachers have a great passion for the subject and a high level of confidence and expertise. Teacher's subject knowledge is very good and this is communicated effectively to the pupils. Teachers set the highest of expectations for work in Religious Education lessons. They use prior knowledge and assessment skilfully to plan lessons that are engaging and creative.
- Next steps for learning are identified in marking and children are given an appropriate amount of time to respond to targeted feedback.
- Self-assessment systems continue to develop and be refined; this is particularly true in key

stage one where self-assessment has been significantly adapted to more closely meet the needs of all learners.

- Work in books and pieces of work that had been moderated by the diocesan moderation process were of a high standard. Teachers are able to talk with confidence about the progress that children are making and this progress is moderated and confirmed by the Religious Education coordinator.
- Work in Religious Education books is well differentiated to meet the needs of different learners. Teachers use a range of assessment strategies to assess the needs of pupils. All adults working with pupils used questioning skilfully to ensure that pupils' progress was rapid.

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

- The inspirational leadership of the Religious Education coordinator inspires confidence and whole-hearted commitment from pupils and colleagues; her knowledge of best practice and current developments in Religious Education ensures that staff are increasingly skilled and share her vision for continuous improvement.
- Skilled staff work closely with teachers new to Catholic education and training needs are identified. Close monitoring of these staff will secure the highest standards of Religious Education.
- Sacramental preparation is given high priority by leaders and is fully embedded in the Religious Education curriculum. The quality of sacramental preparation is deeply appreciated by the parish of St Aidan's, one parent commented that the staff who give their time to prepare children in the parish are "very skilled and have helped the children to understand the importance of their preparation".
- Key governors are highly visible in school and provide appropriate challenge and support to the leadership. They have carried out joint lesson observations and as a consequence can speak confidently about standards across school.
- The school improvement plan identifies the further development of Religious Education as a high priority. The executive headteacher and leadership team think strategically about developments in religious education taking into account the priorities of the Church to ensure that outcomes for all pupils are outstanding.
- Leaders and managers provide strong leadership and conduct a wide range of monitoring activities that are carefully planned to determine the impact of provision.

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.

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

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

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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**1**

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.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**1**

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

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The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

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How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Stephen's RC Primary School
Unique reference number	108621
Local authority	North Tyneside
This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Séamus Cunningham the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese under canon 806 of Canon Law. For voluntary aided schools it also fulfils the responsibility the Governing Body has to inspect the school under s48 of the Education Act 2005.	
Chair of governors	Councillor Eddie Darke
Executive head teacher	Mr Stephen Fallon
Date of previous school inspection	February 2012
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