

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

School: St Peter's RC Middle School

Address: Northumbrian Road
Cramlington
NE23 6BD

Telephone Number: 01670 716343
Email address: felicity.penny@northumberland.gov.uk

School URN: 122368

Headteacher: Mrs Felicity Penny

Chair of Governors: Fr Simon Lerche

Lead Inspector: Sr Sheila McNamara rscj (Lead)
Team Inspector: Mr David Simmons (Team)

Date of Inspection: 13 and 14 July 2010

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 Peter's is a small middle school federated with St Paul's First School and St Benet Biscop High School. The Year 5 and 6 pupils are educated at the Cramlington site and the Year 7 and 8 pupils at the Bedlington site six miles away. The first school, St Peter's and Year 7 and Year 8 at St Benet Biscop, share the same headteacher and governing body. A significant, though small, number of Traveller pupils tend to join and leave the school at various times throughout the year. Most pupils are from a White British background. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll: 127

Planned Admission Number of Pupils: 30

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 70%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 9.6%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 4.7%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 15.7%

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 4%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 12%

RE Department Staffing:

Number of full time RE teachers: 4

Number of part time RE teachers: 0

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 50%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 25%

Percentage of learning time given to RE:

Yr5 10% Yr 6 10%

Yr7 10% Yr8 10%

Parishes served by the school:

St Paul's, Cramlington

St John the Baptist, Annitsford

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

MAIN FINDINGS

St Peter's is a good Catholic school which is rooted in the mission of Catholic education and the Church. It has some outstanding features. An inclusive community spirit is woven through the life of the school. The headteacher's passionate vision, rooted in the Gospel, of wanting every member of the school community to know themselves as made in the image and likeness of God is at the heart of the strong Catholic ethos. This vision is shared with all and is infectious. The school is a reflective community and a strong sense of service and justice for all permeate the school.

Outcomes for pupils are good. Most enjoy Religious Education lessons, work well together and behave well. Pupils' achievement is variable across the Key Stages. Attainment is low in Key Stage 2 and above average in Key Stage 3. From low starting points in lower Key Stage 2, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. There is evidence of recent improvement in the rate of progress and achievement in Year 5 and Year 6. Most pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 make outstanding progress. Pupils contribute well to the Catholic life of the school in a variety of ways and a strength of the school is the outstanding benefits pupils receive from its Catholic character. They respond with reverence and respect to the high quality of worship offered and have developed a very reflective attitude.

The school provides good Catholic education for pupils with the quality of collective worship being an outstanding feature. A wide range of imaginative, vibrant reflective prayer and liturgy is enabling pupils to become more independent at preparing and leading worship themselves. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to outstanding across the Key Stages. Where it is best, lessons are purposeful, stimulating and engaging. Others lack pace and vibrancy. Assessment systems are in place and impacting on learning at Key Stage 3 but, at Key Stage 2, the information is not being used quickly or effectively enough to tackle underachievement. A recent improvement in marking is enabling pupils to know how to improve. Good adaptations are being made to the curriculum to engage learners and meet their needs.

Leaders and managers' promotion of the Catholic life of the school is outstanding with the headteacher's vision of fullness of life for all being shared with the whole community by word, deed and example. The monitoring and evaluation of the provision is, as yet, informal. The hard-working, supportive co-ordinator systematically monitors and evaluates the provision for Religious Education but the impact at Key Stage 2 is slow.

Staff have benefited greatly from her sharing of good practice. Governors are supportive, informed and positively challenging and generally discharge their responsibilities well. The outstanding impact on the school of its partnership activities, its excellent promotion of community cohesion and the level of care and concern for pupils' well-being are strengths of the school. Although the evaluative quality of the self-evaluation form is not strong, the school has a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses and what it needs to do next. This, together with the strength of the partnership and governing body, and the drive and commitment of senior leaders, makes capacity to improve good.

What the school needs to do to improve further:

- Raise achievement in Key Stage 2 curriculum Religious Education by:
 - sharing good practice in teaching;
 - using assessment information more effectively to plan sufficiently challenging activities consistently.
- Monitor and evaluate the Catholic life and prayer life of the school more formally and systematically
- Improve pupils' knowledge of curriculum targets including, where appropriate, peer and self-assessment.

PUPILS

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

2

Pupils in both key stages generally enjoy Religious Education lessons and many are enthusiastic, engaged learners. Most have positive attitudes to learning and work well together in pairs, small groups and as a class. They are becoming increasingly religiously literate at varying rates. Attainment is variable across the key stages and average overall. Standards are low at the end of Key Stage 2 with not enough pupils achieving expected levels of attainment. Standards are above average by the end of Year 8 with most pupils attaining Level 5 or Level 6. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 5 and 6 from low starting points and outstanding progress over the two years of Key Stage 3. There is no significant difference in the progress made by pupils with special educational needs. The quality and rate of learning is inconsistent across the classes because teaching is variable. Where subject knowledge and engaging teaching are strong, learning is better. There are recent signs of improvement in the quality and standard of learning in Key Stage 2. So, though variable, achievement and enjoyment throughout the school are good.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school and benefit immensely from it. They are very proud of their school and display a strong sense of each one being special and unique and made in God's image. They can articulate and show understanding of the Catholic values and principles which underpin the life of the school. They speak warmly of an inclusive atmosphere and a sense of belonging that is based on mutual respect and appreciation and see the school as a celebrating community. All relationships within the school are extremely positive and are underpinned by the Gospel message. They show a deep appreciation of the inspiration of the headteacher and the influence she has in developing their prayer life, a sense of right and wrong, of justice and 'being allowed to make mistakes.' Pupils have a strong appreciation of the school as part of the wider Catholic and local community and they are involved in various activities that support parish life and the local community. Pupils willingly take part in and lead activities that support various charities, showing an awareness of local, national and international needs.

Pupils respond well to the high quality worship offered. They are respectful, reverent, calm and extremely well behaved in the prayerful settings carefully prepared for worship. They take an active part and are keen to participate in singing, reading and reflective silence. All are at ease when praying with the school, class or parish community and show an appreciation and growing understanding of different forms of worship. Their liturgical formation is developing well and they are respectful of others' beliefs and spiritualities. Many pupils, especially at Key Stage 2, are developing increasing confidence and skill in preparing and leading prayer independently. This is as a result of the excellent role-modelling of school leaders. The variety of worship in the school makes a highly significant contribution to the spiritual and moral development of pupils.

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic education

2

Teaching across the school is variable and ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. At Key Stage 3, where it is outstanding, the teacher and support assistant have a very clear understanding of the needs of all pupils and respond to these needs in their planning and in the classroom. Questioning is used to good effect and excellent subject knowledge is used to open up new horizons in pupil learning. A range of learning strategies are employed to maintain motivation and sustain pupil progress. There is some lively, stimulating teaching at Key Stage 2 using a range of imaginative activities to engage pupils. Lessons are planned well to build on prior learning. There is recent evidence of a more appropriate level of challenge being offered to pupils. However, sometimes there is a slowing of pace and less engagement of pupils. Support staff are deployed well to support less able pupils.

Overall, the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance is satisfactory. Assessment systems and procedures are well embedded across the Key Stages and levelling of pupils' work is generally accurate. The school has a broadly accurate picture of achievement and progress over time. In Key Stage 2 the information is, at present, not being used to tackle underachievement or accelerate progress quickly enough. There are recent signs of improvement in feedback to pupils enabling them to begin to know how well they are doing and how to improve. However, target setting is inconsistent across the classes.

At Key Stage 3 assessment data is analysed to ensure that all pupils make the necessary progress. Challenging targets are set and pupils are generally aware of their targets and can explain the steps they need to take to improve performance. Marking and dialogue between the teacher and pupils is of a very high quality and is instrumental in improving pupil progress. Self-assessment and peer assessment are areas for development.

The Religious Education offered to all pupils is good at meeting their varying needs and fulfils the requirements of Bishops' Conference well. At Key Stage 2 effective adaptations have been made, and continue to develop, to enhance and enrich the curriculum, resulting in increased pupil engagement and learning. Extra resourcing is given priority. Across the Key Stages the moral and spiritual dimension of Religious Education is a particularly strong feature.

The partnership with St Benet Biscop has resulted in a new Year 7 programme that reflects the Diocesan requirements about question-led learning. Consequently a meaningful and relevant Key Stage 3 curriculum is in place that engages pupils and responds to their needs. Plans are in place for a similar programme to be drawn up for Year 8. The curriculum provides excellent preparation for pupils as they enter high school.

The quality of collective worship provided by the school is outstanding and a key strength of the school. Prayer and worship are integral to the life of the school and a central part of any school celebration. A wide range and variety of excellent prayer and liturgical opportunities and experiences are offered to pupils incorporating high quality music, visuals, choice of Scripture and prayers as well as reflective silence. Worship is inclusive of all and the spiritual needs of the whole school community are very well met because of the commitment and giftedness of the headteacher and co-ordinator in particular. The prayer life of the school has a very significant impact on the lives of pupils and on their spiritual and moral development. Pupils and staff together are continuously developing knowledge and skills in preparing and leading worship because of inspiring role-models. The school is seen as an integral part of the parish worshipping community.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

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

2

The promotion of the Catholic life of the school by the headteacher, in partnership with the co-ordinator, is outstanding. The strong Catholic ethos which permeates school life at all levels is rooted in and inspired by a deep commitment to and understanding of the Catholic mission of education and has the care of each individual, especially the most vulnerable, at its heart. All opportunities are taken by the headteacher to ensure pupils develop a strong sense of how the Gospel is an inspiration for life and can transform. The monitoring and evaluation of the provision is, as yet, informal and no systematic procedures are in place so planning for improvement is not robust enough.

Religious Education is well led in the school. Regular systematic procedures are in place to monitor provision and the school has an accurate picture of itself. Strengths and weaknesses have been identified and plans for improvement drawn up. The rate of implementation and impact are variable. Accurate data analysis at Key Stage 3 has resulted in above average performance. However, at Key Stage 2 the rate of raising standards is slower though there are signs of improvement. The co-ordinator is organised and efficient and leads staff very well by example and good role modelling. Staff speak highly of the strong level of support they receive which has resulted in a growth in confidence and knowledge.

The governing body discharge their responsibilities well and are led by an able and informed chair who is highly visible and active in the life of the school. Governors are appropriately involved in the evaluation of the school's performance and provide good levels of support and challenge to improve outcomes for pupils. They have a clear picture of the school's strengths, weaknesses and areas for development and are confident of where they want the school to go. Channels of communication are regular and detailed ensuring all are informed of developments in school life.

Partnership activity that focuses on Catholic learning and pupil well-being is outstanding and a strength of the school. In particular the long-term vision of the headteacher, working in conjunction with St Benet's and St Paul's, has resulted in outstanding provision for all pupils. Links with the local parishes are very strong, including involvement in parish Eucharistic celebrations. Involvement in the 'Extended Services' partnership has resulted in an enriching programme that supports volunteering, cultural enhancement and family opportunities. The school is dedicated to supporting all pupils and works very closely with the Local Authority to ensure that all pupils, including some of the most vulnerable, are cared for.

Leadership makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion. In itself the school is a model of cohesion and a deep respect for all members infuses every aspect of school life. All members of the community are encouraged to participate in the life of the school and communication channels within the school are excellent. Pupils have a very strong sense of their own identity and can articulate their beliefs with respect and

tolerance. Pupils have a very strong awareness of the diversity of religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and through their Religious Education, worship and extra-curricula activities they develop a strong sense of respect for all. Pupils participate in a range of cultural and religious activities which further enhance their understanding of their local, national and international communities. A wide range of charity events has given students a very good understanding of the common good and the Catholic principles and values which inspire social action and justice.

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' attainment in RE	3
• 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 leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School	2
• 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	2
• how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for RE and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
• 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	2
• how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well being	1
• how effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion.	1
How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	2
• the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	2
• the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education	3
• the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
• the quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	1