



St Mary's RCVA Primary School

Birch Road, Barnard Castle, Co Durham, DL12 8JR

School Unique Reference Number: **114261**

Inspection dates: 21 – 22 June 2018
Lead inspector: John Hattam

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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 Mary's RCVA Primary School is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding because the well-being, personal and spiritual development of the staff, pupils and their families is at the heart of all that this school does. Strong leaders provide excellent opportunities for all pupils to become involved in charitable fund raising activities which support local, national and global initiatives, contributing significantly to their moral, social and emotional development.
- The quality of Religious Education is outstanding. Pupils speak with great enthusiasm about the many creative opportunities to learn at St Mary's; they value the effort that their teachers make to ensure that they make the very best progress possible. The quality of teaching in Religious Education lessons is outstanding; teachers have excellent subject knowledge.
- The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding. High quality models of Collective Worship and skilful leadership ensure that worship at St Mary's is imaginative, inspirational and filled with joy.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Mary's is a smaller than average sized primary school with a planned admission number of fifteen.
- There are 100 pupils on roll organised across four classes.
- The percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is well below the national figure.
- The percentage of pupils whose first language is not, or is believed not to be English is well below the national figure.
- The percentage of pupils with a special educational need is in line with the national figure.
- The percentage of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 44%.
- The percentage of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 47%

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- To improve the quality of Religious Education by:
 - continuing to support and develop new staff in their expertise on Religious Education to maintain the already high standards.
- To improve the quality of Religious Education by:
 - embedding the philosophy for education program so that pupils can access higher-order skills and reflect more deeply on matters of faith.

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.

- St Mary's mission statement, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me', is central to the life of the school and is understood and embraced by all pupils in their daily life in school.
- Pupils have a deep sense of belonging to their school family and they all do their best to promote and sustain the strong ethos within school and in the wider community. Pupils said, 'every day when we are at school we try to follow in Jesus' footsteps, we learn from our mistakes and how to fix fall-outs'.
- Through the work of the Mini Vinnies, house captains and counsellors, pupils are given many opportunities to become aware of the needs of others, locally and nationally, and then to take action to address these needs. Pupils raise money and awareness for CAFOD, the local foodbank, Maia Mouse fund, Peru mission, helping hands for the homeless and the Uganda Together We Can project.
- Pupils are very proud of their religious identity, deeply valuing the Catholic tradition of their school and its strong links to the parish community. They are regularly involved with parish and diocesan celebrations including celebrations for the year of Oscar Romero, the Year of Mary and youth mission events.

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

- All staff are fully committed to the implementation of the mission statement across school and described, with a great sense of pride, their role in its development.
- St Mary's is a supportive and joyful community. Colleagues appreciate the quality of relationships that exist across school; they are always willing to give their time to support each other as they journey together.
- The learning environment that has been created at St Mary's reflects the school's mission and Catholic character. Beautiful focal areas in classrooms and themed prayer stations across school create an atmosphere that encourages pupils to take time to reflect and pray. Parents appreciate the information that they receive about the Catholic Life of the school, particularly through the school's website.
- Policies and procedures are in place providing the highest levels of pastoral care to all pupils. The school is committed to supporting the most vulnerable pupils. Staff have been

raising money by running a series of distance races to provide a nurture pod, a safe place for children who need extra emotional support. The final leg of this effort brought together the whole school community to support and encourage, with many pupils completing the final mile back to school.

- The highest standards of moral and ethical behaviour are promoted through the clear and consistent communication of the school's expectations.

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

- Leaders in school are instrumental in ensuring that the church's mission is held dear and cherished by all connected with the school. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the Catholic Life of the school and is inspirational in the way that she communicates this to others.
- Leaders are highly ambitious for the school and, more importantly, for all its pupils. The headteacher and Religious Education coordinator are excellent role models and work hard to sustain an authentic Catholic ethos in school. Leaders are highly successful in motivating staff and pupils to be the best they can be.
- The provision for Catholic Life is given the highest priority by all leaders. The self-evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school is an accurate evaluation of the school's many strengths. St Mary's self-evaluation is based on rigorous monitoring and searching analysis which results in clear targets for continuous improvement.
- Parents appreciate the effort that the school makes to involve them in the development of the Catholic Life of the school. As a result they understand the school's mission very clearly and are highly supportive of it.
- Parents are regular visitors to school for liturgies and celebrations. Parents appreciate the sense of community at St Mary's. They feel that the school is outstanding at supporting vulnerable families through difficult periods
- Governors have strong links to the school and make a significant contribution to the Catholic Life of the school.

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.

- Acts of worship engage all pupils' interest; they are enthusiastic about taking part in Collective Worship. Pupils are highly skilled in using a variety of methods to support their prayer.
- From a young age pupils are deeply reverent and respectful during Collective Worship. They take time and effort to prepare sacred spaces in their classrooms, carefully choosing religious artefacts and passages of scripture. As a result of the care taken acts of worship inspire deep thought and heartfelt response.
- Pupils appreciate the opportunities to pray in lots of different ways. They enjoy communal singing and liturgical dance and are happy to share their skills with pupils younger than themselves. During the inspection a small group of pupils led a liturgical dance workshop for other pupils at break time.
- Almost all pupils have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons and feasts.
- Collective Worship at St Mary's is a fully inclusive experience; all staff attend. Collective Worship is given the greatest priority (phone calls and visitors have to wait) which helps to develop in the pupils a true sense that they, and all staff, are valued members of a worshipping community.
- There is a deep sense of respect for other faiths at St Mary's. Pupils are confident enough to celebrate difference and act with integrity when praying with others who do not share their beliefs.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Opportunities for Collective Worship are varied, daily and are central to life at St Mary's. Careful planning by teachers and the Religious Education coordinator ensure that worship is linked to the liturgical year of the Church.
- The school works closely with the themes that the diocese promotes, including those based on the life of Oscar Romero and Our Lady. The school also works hard to allow opportunities for children to develop worship in response to stories in the news or events closer to home, including a family who had suffered bereavement.

- Each class has a well-resourced area where pupils can select material with which they can prepare acts of worship. Pupils are very confident in accessing these resources when planning liturgies.
- Staff prayer is an integral part of all school activity, it is creatively planned and an inspiration to all staff.
- Parents and family members are regular visitors to formal Collective Worship over the course of the year. Parents described how much they valued the opportunities to pray together with their children in school, and also how their children brought prayer home with them in the form of the travelling cribs and the Mary prayer bags. Parents also described their children setting up focal points at home and leading family prayers.
- The parish priest is a regular visitor to school spending time with the children in a prayer group as well as visiting classes. He is also available to support and encourage staff in their spiritual development.

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

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have expert knowledge of how to plan and deliver quality experiences of Collective Worship.
- Senior staff have a thorough understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons, rites and symbols and are able to lead the school in a deepening appreciation of these traditions in a way that is relevant to pupils in a contemporary context.
- Leaders ensure that there is a regular timetable of observations and visits across school, followed by evaluation and discussion in staff meetings to identify strengths and areas for development.
- Liturgical and spiritual development is seen as a priority in the professional development of school leaders and quality time is devoted to it; leaders attend all diocesan training.
- Staff who are not Catholic and those new to Catholic education really value the guidance that they receive from leaders to support their delivery of Collective Worship.
- Leaders regularly seek the views of parents regarding the quality and significance of Collective Worship in school and are quick to respond to these findings in a systematic and thorough way.
- Governors are regular visitors to school and are well-placed to monitor and evaluate the quality of Collective Worship. Governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for further development in 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.

- All pupils enjoy their learning in Religious Education: they say that 'lessons are fun and often very arty with lots of chances to do role play to help us understand all about how much Jesus loves us'. Pupils also said that they enjoy Religious Education because 'the teachers are brilliant at helping us'.
- Evidence from lesson observations show that pupils are very attentive in lessons and pupils' behaviour in lessons and across school is outstanding.
- Pupils make excellent progress in Religious Education over time. There is evidence in books and in the school tracking information that pupils are developing skills, knowledge and understanding. In discussion with pupils they say that they would like more help with reasoning about the world that they live in as it is sometimes difficult to understand why people act in ways that hurt others.
- Pupils are able to accurately describe how well they have done in a particular topic; they are clear about what they need to do to improve pieces of work. Pupils like the way that the teachers now mark books, especially if they are given a question to respond to.
- Outcomes for pupils are very good overall. The attainment for pupils at the end of each key phase is above the diocesan average.

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

- The vast majority of teaching is outstanding and never less than consistently good. Teachers have very high expectations for behaviour and are very skilful in the way that they prepare lessons and as a result pupils are enthused and learn extremely well.
- Teachers use a wide range of imaginative resources and teaching strategies to ensure that pupils are successful in their learning. Teaching assistants are used very well in class to support learning, particularly for those pupils with special educational needs.
- Teachers carefully observe and skilfully question groups of pupils during lessons to re-shape tasks and explanations to maximise learning for every pupil. The Religious Education coordinator works closely with staff who are not Catholic to help develop specialist knowledge and expertise.
- Assessments of pupil progress are regular and the school has a rigorous tracking system which ensures that any underachievement can be quickly identified and tackled. Teachers have a high degree of confidence when levelling pieces of work for internal and external

moderation.

- Pupils are constantly involved in evaluating how well they are learning: this provides them with a high level of confidence in making further improvements. Work is differentiated for pupils of all abilities and appropriate support and guidance is provided so that all groups of pupils make good progress.
- Regular marking clearly identifies the successes that pupils have had and indicates the next steps in their learning.

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

- The self-evaluation of Religious Education by leaders is a coherent reflection of rigorous monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge which is well-informed by current best practice in Religious Education. This rigour allows leaders to plan effectively and ensure outstanding outcomes for all groups of pupils. Self-evaluation has identified philosophy for Religious Education as an area for development.
- All staff are involved in the self-evaluation process; this annual event is given the highest priority by school leaders.
- Leaders recognise that outstanding teaching leads to outstanding outcomes for pupils and so dedicate themselves to recruiting skilled staff and tailoring professional development programs to meet this need.
- The leadership of Religious Education inspires confidence and whole hearted commitment from pupils and colleagues.
- Leaders ensure that Religious Education has a very high profile in the life of the school; this has a profound impact on the moral and spiritual development of the pupils and on their ability to discern their own vocation.
- The Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- Governors are regular visitors to school; they are well-informed and are actively involved in monitoring and evaluation activities. They are guided by the headteacher and the Religious Education coordinator and as a result they have a very good understanding of the quality of Religious Education across school. They provide appropriate challenge to the headteacher and Religious Education coordinator.

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**

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The quality of 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 Mary's RCVA Primary School
Unique reference number	114261
Local authority	Durham
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	Miss Rachel Lavender
Head teacher	Mrs Jane Weatherall
Date of previous school inspection	November 2012
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