



Our Lady and St Thomas' RC Primary

Cumberland Terrace, Willington, Co Durham, DL15 0PB

School Unique Reference Number: **114257**

Inspection dates:	12 – 13 March 2020
Lead inspector:	Lisa Stokoe

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

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

Our Lady and St Thomas' RC Primary is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. All leaders, staff, parents and governors have extremely high expectations and a shared vision for the personal and spiritual development of all pupils.
- The quality of Religious Education is good. It is not yet outstanding as new assessment systems have not yet been fully embedded across the school. Evaluation and monitoring of this new system also needs development.
- The Collective Worship of the school is outstanding because it is central to the daily life of the school. Pupils can confidently plan and lead worship acting with reverence and respect.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- Our Lady and St Thomas is a small Catholic primary school situated on the outskirts of Durham City.
- The school is popular and regularly oversubscribed.
- There are five classes within the school, most of which are mixed aged groups.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium is in line with the national average.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British heritage and the number of pupils for whom English is an additional language is average.
- The proportion of special educational needs pupils is higher than the national average, although there are currently no pupils with an educational health care plan.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Improve the quality of Collective Worship by:
 - the introduction of more contemporary variations of prayer to widen the pupils' prayer experiences.
- Improve the quality of Religious Education by:
 - continuing to embed the new assessment systems with accuracy across the school.
 - developing formal and rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure the new assessment is used and understood by all stakeholders.

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.

- Our Lady and St Thomas' mission statement, 'You are unique, talented and loved by God', is central to the life of the school and is understood and embraced by all pupils in their daily life in school.
- Pupils are happy, confident and secure in their own stage of spiritual growth, demonstrating exemplary behaviour towards adults and each other. They can clearly express how they are taught to respect each other and treat everyone as they would like to be treated.
- Pupils have a strong sense of Catholic identity and understand the importance of their own beliefs as well as others within the school community.
- Pupils have a very strong sense of social justice, and the school is in the process of being awarded Rights Respecting School Gold Award as well as holding the International Schools Award with strong global links.
- Pupils are aware of the needs of others and respond willingly to those beyond the school. They articulate their views with confidence explaining the purpose of fundraising for various charities. These include a local foodbank, Children in Need, MacMillan cancer research and the Salvation Army Toy Appeal over the Advent period. During Lent they have chosen the Refugee Project in Newcastle, linking with the parish to send backpacks to other children.

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

- There is a strong sense of family in all areas of school life, evidenced in the quality of relationships that exist between all members of the community; pupils, parents, staff, leaders and governors. Excellent relationships and the teamwork within the school community are key strengths of the school. As several parents said, 'the school is genuinely interested and bothered about everyone' and 'they know all the children and families so well'.
- Pupils are very responsive to the opportunities they are given to support their personal and spiritual development. They use the Comfort Zone quiet space with respect and ease.

- Clear policies and procedures are in place, which provide the highest levels of pastoral support to pupils and their families, and there is an explicit commitment to the most vulnerable.
- Pastoral programmes, such as the Road Centre counselling sessions and the emotional wellbeing nurse, have a significant impact on pupils and their families.
- Policies for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) are in place. The recommended Journey in Love programme is currently being followed, with plans in place to introduce the new Life to the Full in the summer term.
- Our Lady and St Thomas' has a vibrant and engaging learning environment, apparent both in the classrooms and around the school itself, where focal points and displays linked to spiritual development provide opportunities to pray, reflect and celebrate its Catholic character.

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

- The headteacher and Religious Education coordinator provide a clear direction and vision for the Catholic Life of the school. They are conscientious in this role, providing a strong sense of spiritual purpose. They have a very clear understanding of the vision of Catholic education and their role in the mission of the Church.
- School self-evaluation is rigorous and gathered from a range of sources. It identifies areas for future development and is directly linked to the school development plan.
- The professional and spiritual development of all staff is given high priority by leaders with regular opportunities offered through individual and whole school training. As a result, all staff have a clear understanding of the school's mission and are highly supportive of it.
- Governors know the school well: they are knowledgeable, well informed and provide support as well as effective challenge. This leads to well-targeted school improvements to continually enhance the Catholic Life of the school.
- The excellent leadership, and teamwork, at Our Lady and St Thomas' ensures that all pupils are extremely well cared for and nurtured in a loving, safe and supportive environment.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

- 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 good.

- Pupils enjoy Religious Education lessons. They have positive attitudes to their learning, display interest and want to do their best. Pupils can talk with some confidence about their learning in Religious Education.
- Pupils start school with knowledge and skills typically below those expected for their age. They generally make good progress in their learning as they progress through the school. There are slight variations in the attainment and progress of pupils with special educational needs and those known to be entitled to free school meals. Leaders are aware of this and are addressing it within the school development plan.
- Through evidence in books, and discussions with pupils, they are able to demonstrate effective use of prior knowledge when making links between religious ideas and using scriptural references accurately. They can link their work to everyday life and say that they need to live like Jesus to become more like him.
- Behaviour for learning is very good: pupils are focused and disruptions to lessons are unusual. Pupils value and appreciate the help they receive from their teachers. They say, 'our lessons are well planned, and teachers are always there to help you and explain if you don't understand'.
- Pupils identified as having special educational needs are well supported by highly skilled teaching assistants.
- The standards of attainment for most pupils in each year group are on track to be at least in line with Diocesan averages and where this is not the case, the difference is diminishing.

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

- The quality of teaching in the school is good overall. Teachers demonstrate high expectations of behaviour and engagement and as a result, pupils from across the school concentrate well.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and are a real strength of the school. This was commented upon by staff, the parish priest, pupils and parents alike who said, 'we care deeply about all of our children' and 'the children are at the heart of everything we do'. Additional staff are used well within the classroom to support pupils and as a result most pupils make progress over time.

- Teachers have high expectations, and all have enthusiasm and interest in the subject, seeing it as a core subject within the school. Teachers have used and adapted resources such as Come and See to suit their mixed age classes. This enables them to deliver well planned activities through a range of teaching strategies. This has helped pupils to develop and extend their knowledge and skills and their enthusiasm for learning.
- Teachers have recently embarked upon the use of the new assessment materials introduced to the school in September 2019. Staff are extremely positive that the end of phase statements will suit the mixed aged classes and aid progression and continuity within the school. This system needs to be fully embedded and the accuracy of all staff ensured over the following years.
- The achievement and efforts of pupils are often celebrated in a variety of ways within the school community, including house points and Golden Stars of the Week Awards.

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

- Leaders and governors ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the Bishops' Conference requirements in every respect and that the required amount of time is given to Religious Education in each key stage.
- As a result of clear leadership, Religious Education has a high profile in the life of the school. Governors are regular visitors to the school and are actively involved in the school and parish community. They have a good understanding of the school's performance in Religious Education and offer both challenge and support.
- Leaders have ensured that Religious Education has been resourced appropriately at every level and that this subject compares favourably with other core subjects within the school. Resources for Religious Education across the school are varied allowing pupils to experience Religious Education in different ways.
- The headteacher and Religious Education coordinator are committed to ensure that every pupil achieves the very best they can. They have a clear view of strategies to support improvements in teaching and keep all staff well informed as to current developments. They inspire and support the whole community.
- Leaders ensure that opportunities exist for pupils to experience their own traditions as well as those of other faiths. For example, a Buddhist pupil helped others learn more about his faith when studying Buddhism by being the expert in the class.
- A new tracking system is in place and pupils are monitored to ensure that they make progress, both throughout the year and annually. Leaders are working hard to ensure that they are developing formal and rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure the new assessment is used and understood by all stakeholders. The school also works closely with their cluster to moderate standards and share good practice.
- Diocesan guidelines for sacramental preparation are followed enthusiastically by all. The parish priest, along with other school and parish members, work very effectively with pupils, parents and staff.

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.

- All pupils engage with enthusiasm and respect in acts of Collective Worship. Pupils are at ease when praying in school. Their response in both large and smaller gatherings is reverent and spiritual. As one pupil said, 'I feel calm, peaceful and closer to God'.
- Collective Worship is seen as central to the life of the school with an emphasis on pupils being active participants, regardless of their ability or faith. Pupils have a good understanding of the Church's year and liturgical seasons and feasts appropriate to their age and ability.
- Pupils were able to name and say many of the formal, more traditional prayers of the Church, as well as talking enthusiastically about using music and dance to enhance the quality of their worship. They would like to develop this further with other contemporary varieties of prayer.
- Pupils across the school lead and participate in prayer with confidence. They plan worship from reception, initially with support, but this develops through the phases with upper key stage two pupils being able to do this independently. Pupils say it makes them feel hopeful and gives them courage to do things.
- From the earliest stages pupils recognise the special nature of prayer and show respect. They are aware that religious beliefs are important, demonstrating respect for their own faith and the faith of others. They like talking to God and say, 'He listens no matter what'.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Collective Worship is given a high priority. It is central to the life of the school and a key part of every celebration. The whole school liturgy on a Monday morning sets the tone for the week.
- The Collective Worship policy is clear and provides a range of strategies to ensure worship is both regular and inclusive.
- Collective Worship is carefully planned and resourced using the statements from Nurturing Human Wholeness and the liturgical year. Praying together is a regular and uplifting experience.

- Skilled staff enable pupils to confidently plan, prepare and lead Collective Worship. They have a thorough understanding of the purpose of Collective Worship and ensure that skills are built upon from reception to year 6 in a coherent manner. In Class 4 a liturgy based upon the Feeding of the 5,000 was well planned by pupils and delivered high quality worship engaging all those present, spiritually and prayerfully.
- Parents, parishioners and governors regularly attend class masses on the first Friday of each month at the neighbouring church and also enjoy other celebrations led by the school such as Carols around the Tree at Christmas.

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

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are highly visible leaders of Collective Worship within the school. They are excellent role models for both staff and pupils and show expert knowledge of how to plan and deliver high quality Collective Worship.
- Leaders have an extensive understanding of the Church's liturgical year and traditions which they share with staff and pupils on a regular basis. They are a source of knowledge and inspiration to others.
- Collective Worship is promoted throughout the school with meaningful displays in classrooms and shared areas, such as the hall and corridors. This helps pupils understand the essential elements that are found in outstanding Collective Worship.
- Leaders recognise the importance of nurturing staff as well as pupils, consequently, all feel valued and included. Diocesan, cluster and in-house training has been accessed by staff to support them in their spiritual and liturgical understanding.
- Collective Worship has been reviewed as part of the self-evaluation process. Leaders have sought the views of pupils, staff and parents. All responses are highly valued and used to inform the continual improvement in driving the school forward. Feedback is analysed and acted upon and Collective Worship in school is an ever evolving and improving activity.

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

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**2**

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

2

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

2

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

1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**1**

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

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

1

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

1

SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	Our Lady and St Thomas' RC Primary
Unique reference number	114257
Local authority	Durham
This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt Reverend Robert Byrne CO the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle 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	Alison Aisbitt
Headteacher	Ruth Veitch
Date of previous school inspection	November 2014
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