



St Benet's Catholic Primary School Ouston

URN: 148205

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of Bishop Stephen Wright, Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
21–22 November 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

1

Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

1

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the Diocesan Bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

1

Compliance statement

- St Benet's Catholic Primary School is fully compliant in relation to curriculum time dedicated to the teaching of religious education laid down by the Bishops' conference.
- St Benet's Catholic Primary School is fully compliant with all the requirements of the Diocesan Bishop.
- St Benet's Catholic Primary School has responded and met the areas for further development which were identified within the last inspection in 2016.

What the school does well

- The headteacher is an inspirational Catholic leader whose genuine passion and commitment to the faith drive every decision that is made.
- High levels of pastoral care between staff, pupils, leaders and families embody Christ's teachings by showing compassion, kindness, and respect in their relationships with one another. All stakeholders are secure in the fact that they are known and cared for by the leaders and the community, and as a result they flourish.
- There is a palpable sense of Christ at the centre and heart of this community. Faith permeates all aspects of school life and is evidenced in interactions with all stakeholders.
- There is evidence of strong subject knowledge, creativity in task design and good quality adaptive teaching to meet the needs of learners.
- The opportunities for pupil leadership in Catholic life and mission and collective worship are rich. These are enthusiastically and responsibly embraced by pupils.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the high-quality religious education provision is consistent across all age ranges.
- Embed the good practice which is currently being established and linked to the advancement in pupil-led prayer opportunities.
- Develop chaplaincy provision by developing the role within school using the staff expertise which has been identified by school leaders.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

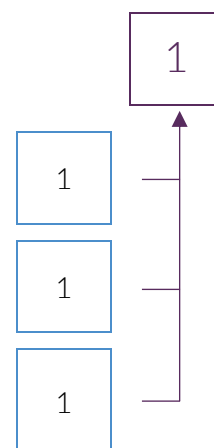
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



St Benet's Catholic Primary School is a living example of its mission statement, 'a happy and holy place of learning and the centre of a thriving community'. The statement is known and permeates the community at all levels. Pupils are able to articulate what the mission statement means to them and how they live it at school. The sense of belonging to the family of St Benet's is a great strength of the community. Pupils proudly embrace personal responsibilities and talk confidently about their roles as prefects, Mini-Vinnies, school council members and part of the Cafod Club. One pupil commented, 'It makes you feel full – there is nothing else better to do in the day than help others.' Pupils take on a leading role in the demands of Catholic social teaching and are able to articulate their religious and spiritual beliefs which guide their decisions, behaviour and practice. Pupils show a good understanding and respect for those of other faiths. The youngest children were able to confidently share how they had learnt about Judaism from a special visitor. Older children were able to confidently articulate the importance of, 'learning more about other faiths so that you can live God's way and respect others'.

There is a genuine and profound understanding of Christ at the centre of this community, which is reflected in the high levels of pastoral care at all levels. Living the gospel message is at the heart of every interaction within St Benet's, creating a community where faith is made tangible through daily actions. Staff, pupils and leaders embody Christ's teachings by showing compassion, kindness and respect in their relationships with one another. The Catholic identity is clearly visible around school, reflected through the high-quality environment, rich in expressions of its distinctive nature. There is a wealth of religious displays, which are both informative and celebratory, linked to Catholic social teaching, key liturgical events such as Remembrance Sunday, Diocesan initiatives such as the Year of Prayer and protected characteristics such as displays linked to British Values and National Anti-Bullying Week. The richness of the St Benet's Catholic identity is further enhanced by the reflective spaces created throughout school such as Father Duffy's Altar. Relationships, sex and health education is

delivered using Diocesan approved resources and parents are consulted annually with regard to more sensitive elements.

The school leaders are inspirational in embodying the mission of the Church, serving as dedicated witnesses to faith, hope and love, ensuring Christ is at the centre, and heart, of this community. Through their vision, and authentic example, they create a culture reflecting the teachings of Christ, ensuring that gospel values permeate every aspect of school life. The headteacher is an inspiration and highly valued by the whole school community, one governor commented, 'a phenomenal Catholic leader, who keeps the children at the heart of everything'. This was particularly evident through the high-quality care and support provided during the disruption around reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) within the school building. Parents stated that they were amazed at how the complexity of the situation was managed, 'It was a testament to the leadership and every teacher in school...everyone went above and beyond.' Governors are passionate about their role and are actively involved in all elements of school life, they are very aware of the mission of the school and are an integral part in driving school improvement forward. Staff feel very well supported by their colleagues on a daily basis and through more significant personal challenges, 'I couldn't have got through it without them – it is like a family here.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

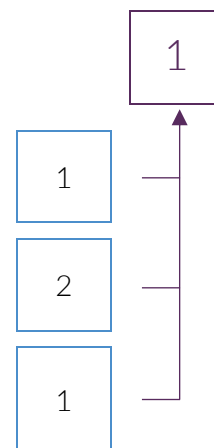
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Pupils, across all ranges, are actively engaged in religious education lessons and as a result behaviour for learning is of a consistently high standard, with any low-level disturbance swiftly and effectively addressed. They approach activities with enjoyment and interest and levels of engagement within lessons are high across all age-ranges. Pupils are developing an excellent knowledge and understanding of the learning required by the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. They use religious vocabulary in their spoken and written responses and demonstrate a high level of understanding. Pupils are able to use their knowledge both in religious education lessons but also when thinking about their religious commitment in everyday life. Relative to their age, and stage of development, work is of a consistently high standard, demonstrating excellent presentation and progression. Pupils as young as Reception, could share key religious understanding and were able to make links between their learning referring to Jesus' birth in Bethlehem in a stable when playing in the continuous provision celebrating a birthday party. Older pupils could confidently make links between work within lessons and modern-day life, referring to God's special message to love one another.

The religious education curriculum is well planned and sequential following the *Come and See* resource and enriched through carefully planned activities. The majority of staff confidently demonstrate high-levels of authentic subject knowledge and are able to articulate this clearly to the pupils, skilfully using questions to clarify and deepen levels of understanding. The school use a mastery approach in religious education lessons, using carefully positioned support staff to sensitively address the needs of learners alongside the use of subtle adaptations, such as sentence stems and word banks, to ensure that all pupils reach their full potential. Review and recall of knowledge are incorporated into the start of lessons to support pupils knowing and remembering more. The use of 'deeper thinking' questions is currently being embedded to develop a consistent approach with the older children. Where evident, this enables pupils to clarify, extend and consolidate their knowledge and understanding and make links between

curriculum content and Catholic life. Pupil books show creativity in task design, incorporating written work alongside art and role play to engage learners.

Leaders and governors place high priority on the teaching of religious education and ensure that the curriculum is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Religious education is given full parity to other core subjects in relation to teaching time, resourcing and high-quality continued professional development. Leaders and governors have a clear vision of the strengths and areas for further development in religious education and have a strategic plan to move the teaching and learning forward to ensure consistency in provision. Self-evaluation is rigorous and governors are involved in both the discussions and the implementation of the monitoring programme. The local governing committee are passionate and committed in their roles and rigorous in their fulfilment of these. They are knowledgeable of the religious education curriculum and pupil attainment. The governors are a real strength of the school due to many of them either being currently, or previously, involved in Catholic education in their own personal lives. This empowers the governors to support whilst effectively challenging the headteacher and religious education lead in their shared drive to continue to move things forward.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1

1

Pupils throughout school understand a wide variety of ways to pray due to the wealth of opportunities and experiences provided to them. They confidently participate in both traditional prayer and spontaneous prayer, responding to events linked to school, local, national or global issues and events. Pupils demonstrate high levels of reverence and respect, shown both in prayerful silences through to their engagement in communal singing. Pupils work collaboratively with their peers and staff to thoughtfully prepare well-constructed prayerful experiences which they deliver to their peers. Pupils are empowered to take ownership of their own personal faith and equipped with the confidence to share this with the wider school community, for example, pupils planning and leading prayer opportunities in their own class, end of topic respond liturgies shared with parents and whole school liturgies led by older pupils. Pupils understand the structure of celebration of the word, leading and participating in a variety of ways. There are very high levels of participation and engagement in all forms of liturgy in relation to communal singing, liturgical dance and signing. Pupils regularly evaluate liturgies, identifying areas for further development to enhance the experience.

The centrality of prayer is evident from the moment you enter St Benet's Catholic Primary School. There are clear signs of the distinctive Catholic nature evident through high-quality display and focal areas throughout the school environment. Prayer spaces have a central place within all classrooms and have been developed within the school environment, these are thoughtfully linked to the liturgical season. Dedicated prayer spaces, such as 'Caroline's library' and the prayer station created in memory of Deacon Peter, are cherished, sacred areas which the pupils use for spontaneous prayer. There is an embedded pattern of prayer which punctuates the school day and well-chosen scripture is central to prayerful gatherings. Staff are excellent role models of exemplary practice and skilfully support pupils in preparing prayerful opportunities for their peers. The school empowers the parents to support their children at home with their faith journey. 'By opening their doors to parents, they have made the Catholic faith more accessible to parents who may have been reluctant to pray themselves or explore matters of

faith at home.' Another example is parents embarking on the Journey of Faith, a direct result of their experiences at St Benet's and the outreach approach linked to collective worship.

Leaders and governors have developed a policy which is in line with Diocesan guidance and have a comprehensive strategy for strengthening prayerful opportunities through increased pupil involvement. The headteacher's vision moving forward is to further deepen pupil chaplaincy to support older pupils in planning and leading prayerful opportunities in younger year groups. Leaders and governors recognise and value the impact of the prayer opportunities on all stakeholders, prayer is prioritised during challenging times. Staff, governors and parents spoke about the fact that even though they were displaced as a school, that they never lost their sense of belonging, this was down to the headteacher's determination, drive and passion to maintain the spiritual element of the community, 'keeping them together and helping them see the light after RAAC'. The commitment to prayer, service and inclusive leadership inspires both staff and pupils to live out their faith with courage and compassion. By fostering strong relationships with the parish, families and the wider community, they actively promote the Church's mission of evangelisation, social justice and care for the most vulnerable. School leaders place high priority on spiritual formation of staff to allow them to grow in faith, this includes an annual professional training day devoted to staff formation.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Benet's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148205
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8403346
Full postal address of the school	St Benet's Catholic Primary School, St Benet's Way, Ouston, Chester le Street, DH2 1QX
School phone number	01914105857
Headteacher	Catherine Young
Chair of governors	Monica Kelsey
School Website	www.stbenetsouston.bwcet.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	October 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Leigh-anne Young
Stephanie Brown

Lead Inspector
Team Inspector

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement