



St Mary Magdalen's RC Primary School

Denehouse Road, Seaham, County Durham, SR7 7BJ

School Unique Reference Number: **114236**

Inspection dates:	25 – 26 January 2018
Lead inspector:	John Hattam
Team inspector:	Elizabeth Seagrove

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

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Mary Magdalen's RC Primary School is a good Catholic school because:

- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding because 'the family of St Mary Magdalen's school is centred on Christ'. All members of this faith community have a strong sense of belonging and a deep commitment to ensuring that the faith of pupils, staff, parents, and governors is nurtured on a daily basis.
- Religious Education is good. Teachers have a clear understanding of the value of Religious Education which they communicate effectively to pupils.
- The Collective Worship of the school is good because all pupils act with reverence and respect. Pupils are well supported and encouraged in their ability to plan and lead worship. Senior leaders are excellent role models and have a clear vision as to how Collective Worship can be improved across school.
- St Mary Magdalen's school is a joyful community where pupils, parents and staff feel valued and benefit from a strong sense of family which pervades all areas of school life.

It is not yet outstanding because:

- Collective Worship is not yet outstanding because pupils do not take the initiative in leading the community life of prayer.
- Religious Education is not yet outstanding because not all teachers have a high level of confidence and expertise both in terms of their specialist knowledge and their understanding of effective learning in Religious Education.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Mary Magdalen's school is a larger than average-sized primary school with 285 pupils on roll.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- 72% are baptised Catholics and a further 22% of pupils are from other Christian denominations.
- The percentage of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils whose first language is not or is believed not to be English is significantly lower than the national average.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Improve standards in Religious Education by:
 - Ensuring that standards in teaching are consistently good or outstanding across school. That staff at the beginning of their careers, or those new to Catholic education, have access to the very best support, professional development and challenge that the school has to offer.
- Improve standards in Collective Worship by:
 - Enabling pupils to take a more active approach in planning and preparing creative acts of Collective Worship which engage and inspire their peers in deep thought and heartfelt response.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

1

- 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.

1

1

1

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic Life of the school through their many acts of charity, supporting a wide range of causes including; the Bradley Lowery Foundation, Macmillan Cancer Care, Children in Need, Forever Angels and Cafod.
- Pupils seize every opportunity to live out their school mission through the work of the Mini Vinnies group. They have worked with the Shaw Trust to support vulnerable adults, a local women's refuge and have organised the collection and donation of items to support a local foodbank.
- Pupils are alert to the needs of others and care deeply about their friends. The pupils are very proud of a garden of reflection and prayer which was created in the grounds of the school in response to a family bereavement which touched the lives of many pupils and parents.
- Pupils take an active role in the life of the parish and the wider Diocesan family, attending the Youth Ministry Team primary festival and diocesan events including Faith 15.
- Pupils including those who are not Catholic are proud of their own religious identity saying, 'At St Mary Magdalen's school we are all part of one big Catholic family where we all try our best to look after each other.'
- The behaviour of almost all pupils is exemplary at all times; they are welcoming, open, honest and care deeply about their friends, their school and those who make up the wider family of St Mary Magdalen's school.

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 possible priority and is embodied in the school mission statement. All pupils are encouraged and supported to engage in the world in which they live and be examples to others around them.
- All staff are fully committed to promoting the mission statement and seek out opportunities to engage pupils in activities and campaigns which help them to contribute to the Catholic Life of the school.
- There is a strong sense of community at all levels within school. Pupils, staff, parents and governors describe the school as 'one family'. All stakeholders are encouraged to support each other so that everyone can thrive.

- Clear policies and procedures are in place which provides the highest levels of pastoral care to support pupils and their families. Parents described the introduction of the Rainbows programme as, 'Having made an incredible difference to the life of my child...he now has someone to talk to when he is feeling vulnerable.'
- Staff appreciate the care and attention that is given to them and their pastoral needs.
- The learning environment is a clear reflection of the school's Catholic character evidenced through high quality displays, artefacts and the creation of sacred spaces around school.

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

- Inspirational school leaders are deeply committed to the mission of the church and have a very clear vision about how to deliver this mission at St Mary Magdalen's school.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher, governors and senior staff lead by example and are highly successful in motivating pupils to be the best they can be.
- The school's self-evaluation has clear links to school development plans which are focused on continuous improvement in the Catholic Life of the school.
- The school has rigorous systems for monitoring the Catholic Life of the school which lead to sustained improvements.
- The school now has very effective strategies for engaging with parents and carers who have a thorough understanding of the school's mission and are highly supportive of it and the values it promotes.
- The school has very strong links with the parish and the local community. Regular visits from the parish priest and a robust sacramental preparation programme are greatly appreciated by parents and pupils.
- Governors are highly skilled and make a significant contribution to the Catholic Life of the school. They work closely with leaders in school as part of the self-evaluation process, taking an active role in the Catholic Life of the school. Extensive first-hand knowledge allows governors to challenge as well as support where necessary.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

2

- 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.

2

2

1

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

- Collective Worship engages the interest of most pupils. They reflect in silence and join in community prayers with confidence. Pupils have a mature approach to Collective Worship and act with reverence at all times.
- Pupils are supported to prepare and lead Collective Worship and enjoy taking part in acts of worship, describing worship as, 'A time to be still with God'.
- Pupil-led Collective Worship is an area for development; pupils need more opportunities to be creative in their planning and delivering of Collective Worship to avoid it becoming formulaic.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of religious seasons and feasts. Pupils in year two were able to explain with confidence why they had chosen the artefacts for their focal point in their class Collective Worship, and the significance of the colour of the cloth.
- As a result of planned visits to places of worship pupils are well informed about, and have a deep sense of respect, for other world faiths.
- Pupils from across school were able to explain what it meant to be part of a community that prays together. Pupils said that, 'Praying together makes St Mary Magdalen's school a special place.' Pupils also said, 'Praying together makes us part of one school family.'

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is good.

- Staff and pupils pray together regularly and Collective Worship is at the heart of all school celebrations. Parents and parishioners are regular visitors to school and comment positively on the welcoming atmosphere in school and value the opportunity to pray with the pupils.
- Staff meet together to pray at regular intervals during the school week.
- Pupils are regular visitors to the parish church, taking part in worship at parish masses and special events.
- Focal areas in classes and around school are carefully planned and well-resourced to reflect the liturgical year. Great care has been taken to promote Collective Worship through creative displays around school, particularly in the main halls which encourage children to think deeply and reflect during acts of worship.

- As the school has expanded, great care has been taken to ensure that the Catholic character of the school is not only maintained but promoted. An excellent example of this is the provision on a specially commissioned El Salvador cross on the external wall of the newest school building. This beautiful cross is an outward facing sign of the school's commitment to promoting worship.
- Class teachers accept responsibility for leading prayer and involve pupils in its delivery but not enough time is spent on innovation and encouraging pupils' leadership.
- There is a clear policy for Collective Worship, which is both regular and inclusive. The well-planned programme of masses, liturgies, and other special celebrations are appropriately matched to the pupils' stages of development.

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

- The headteacher is an excellent role model; he is highly motivated and aspirational in his vision for all pupils and staff in school. He has a clear understanding of the strengths and the areas for development in Collective Worship.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior staff know how to plan and deliver quality experiences of Collective Worship.
- The Religious Education coordinator has worked hard to provide quality training opportunities and support for newly qualified staff and more experienced staff new to Catholic education.
- Through an extensive monitoring and evaluation process the Religious Education coordinator has worked closely with the headteacher to identify areas for development in the provision of Collective Worship.
- Leaders regularly seek the views of pupils, staff and parents regarding the quality and significance of Collective Worship.
- The sacramental preparation programme is a strength of the school as it draws on the expertise of the parish priest and members of the parish and school communities.
- Governors are very well informed about the provision for, and the monitoring of Collective Worship in school. Regular updates are provided at governor meetings as well as the information provided through newsletters and the school website. Governors are regular visitors to school so are well placed to inform and challenge the quality of provision as part of the school self-evaluation process.

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.

2

2

2

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

- The quality of learning and progress in Religious Education is good. Most pupils enjoy their learning in Religious Education, have positive attitudes and work well in lessons, applying themselves to the tasks and working at a good pace. Consequently outcomes for pupils are in line with diocesan averages.
- Pupils enjoy talking about their work in Religious Education and take pride in their work. They are able to say why they enjoy it and what they have learned from it. Pupils have an understanding of how well they have done and how to improve.
- Good behaviour has a positive impact on learning across the school. Pupils are articulate and thoughtful in their responses.
- Pupils identified as having a special educational need are well supported by teaching assistants and lessons are planned so as to ensure their engagement in lessons.
- Opportunities exist for pupils to experience their own traditions as well as those of other faiths. These experiences are enhanced by visits. For example, some pupils visited a synagogue when studying Judaism and were able to explain how this visit had helped them to deepen their understanding of the Jewish faith.
- An excellent relationship exists between all staff and pupils. Pupils value the support they receive from their teachers saying, 'Teachers help us to learn quickly and make links to scripture.'

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

- The quality of teaching in Religious Education is good overall with some outstanding teaching. Where teaching is strong, staff are confident in their subject knowledge. They have a clear understanding of the value and importance of Religious Education and communicate this effectively to their pupils.
- A wide variety of teaching strategies such as role play and interviews linked to recent visits, together with well-paced lessons, ensure that pupils engage well with their learning.
- The Come and See programme is being used effectively alongside diocesan planning templates and support materials. Lessons are purposeful. Pupils relate to and engage with the tasks planned. The school has a good range of resources to promote learning.

- Teachers mark work regularly and the quality of feedback given to pupils is generally positive and supportive. The new system of giving feedback about work is understood by pupils who speak positively about it. Pupils are able to use the 'I Can' statements to show their understanding of the learning focus covered in lessons.
- In a minority of lessons, a lack of specialist subject knowledge means that activities are not always best matched to pupils' abilities, or fail to engage all groups of learners. In some classes the quantity of work recorded is relatively low when compared to other classes.

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

- The headteacher and Religious Education coordinator have a clear vision for Religious Education at St Mary Magdalen's school. They are effective in promoting the importance of Religious Education with pupils, staff, parents, governors and the wider community.
- The Religious Education coordinator has established a comprehensive programme of support to develop staff, which is based on rigorous monitoring and forms part of an effective self-evaluation process.
- Priorities for improvement in Religious Education are based on an accurate picture of pupil attainment and progress across school.
- The leadership team attend diocesan training and moderation events so that they are well placed to make accurate judgements about the quality of Religious Education.
- Staff and governors are kept well informed of the priorities which are identified through the strategies undertaken to evaluate the provision and outcomes for pupils. They are very well informed and knowledgeable about the school's strengths and further areas for development. Governors are regular visitors to the school and are committed to the development of the school providing appropriate support and challenge to the headteacher and senior leadership team.
- Parents are very well-informed about Religious Education through regular newsletters and updates on the school website.
- Diocesan guidelines for sacramental preparation are followed enthusiastically and this further forges strong links with the parish community.
- The Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

HOW EFFECTIVE THE SCHOOL IS IN PROVIDING CATHOLIC EDUCATION:

2

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

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:

2

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

2

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

2

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

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.

2

SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Mary Magdalen's RC Primary School
Unique reference number	114236
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.	
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