



Our Lady Star of the Sea

Thorpe Road, Horden, Peterlee, SR8 4AB

School Unique Reference Number: **114281**

Inspection dates:	30 April – 01 May 2015
Lead inspector:	Carolyn Duffy

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires Improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Catholic Life:		Good	2
Collective Worship:		Good	2
Religious Education:		Good	2

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

Our Lady Star of the Sea is a good Catholic school because:

- Catholic ethos and faith are central to the school and reflected in all its work. There is a shared commitment to celebrating the achievement of all. High expectations, dedicated staff, effective teamwork and a palpable sense of community underpin all aspects of the school's work.
- The provision for Catholic Life is outstanding because the school's mission statement is evident in the quality of relationships that exist. There is an explicit commitment to the needs of all pupils and their families, not least the most vulnerable members of the school and parish community.
- The headteacher is highly motivated and aspirational for all the pupils and staff. She has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and works ceaselessly to improve provision at all levels.
- Collective Worship is good and is centred on clear themes and messages with key stage two pupils independently leading worship.
- Religious Education is good because pupils make progress. It is enjoyed by all pupils and behaviour for learning is good.

It is not yet outstanding because:

- Religious Education is not yet outstanding because the quality of moderation, assessment, marking and feedback are not consistent across the school.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- Our Lady Star of the Sea RCVA Primary School is a much smaller than average primary school serving the parishes of Our Lady Star of the Sea, Horden and St Mary's, Easington Colliery.
- The headteacher is also executive headteacher with another neighbouring school. She divides her time equally between the two.
- The four classes are all mixed age groups – Reception/year one, year one/year two, year three/year four, year five/year six.
- The pupil population comes mainly from the two ex-mining villages of Horden and Easington where there are high levels of unemployment. Levels of deprivation are among the highest 20% of schools in the country. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is well below average.
- Almost all pupils are white British and there are a small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education by:
 - Improving consistency of marking, assessment and feedback
 - Ensuring there are frequent opportunities for moderation within school and across other schools
- Improve the provision for Collective Worship by:
 - Further developing creative prayer spaces within the school grounds

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

2

- 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 good.

- Most pupils are regularly involved with revisiting the mission statement through pupil questionnaires and class discussions. They contribute to shaping it through their involvement in pupil groups such as the Mini SVP group who were able to describe in full the wide range of provision offered to members of the school community and the wider local community. They suggest ideas about how the school might develop and these are then implemented over time. For example, they described how they research charities on the internet and investigate projects they can become involved with to raise funds such as raising money by making calendars to sell at the Christmas Fair.
- Pupils' behaviour was good throughout the inspection. Pupils say they feel safe and are happy. Pupils also commented that they tried to be considerate, thoughtful of others and understand the difference between right and wrong. The pupil group commented that the school teaches them to 'do good acts and think about the community'.
- Pupils were knowledgeable about the liturgical year and recalled how the school celebrated key events such as Lent, Easter and Advent both in school and in the parish. They were equally interested in other faiths and talked knowledgeably about respect and equality for people of other faiths. Pupils volunteered that they, 'would like to learn more about Islam as it was important for today to know how people think.'

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

- The Catholic Life of the school is the top priority for all staff and governors who are fully committed to ensuring that the school is the best it can be. This is reflected in the relationships between all members of the school community and the school environment where there are many examples of the Catholic character of the school. This includes displays, artefacts, photographs, prayers and certificates which recognise the school's involvement with other agencies. Staff, governors and parents describe the school as a 'family' where everyone is important and cared for.
- The school offers a wide range of opportunities for pupils to be involved in the Catholic Life of the school such as serving at the Mother's Day annual lunch, visits to the elderly in the parish and fundraising for CAFOD.
- Clear policies and procedures are in place, which provide high levels of support for pupils, parents, staff and the wider community. There are many regular and varied campaigns for those in need, for example, the local food bank, the crocus campaign to raise money for

polio victims and involvement with Rotary.

- The school's high expectations are consistently promoted through a clear and explicit behaviour policy. Pupils were able to describe how the policy has impacted upon behaviour in school over the last few years. For example, older pupils talked about the 'buddy bench' not being used now because everyone had a friend but that they wanted to keep it in case it was ever needed. Pupils also described knowing what was expected of them and the consequences if poor behaviour continued. For example, they knew and agreed with the series of consequences of warnings and parental involvement before a pupil was sent to another school for a period of time. They were able to talk about justice and reconciliation and a year six pupil said, 'teachers will always give you another chance to improve just as Jesus would'.

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

- The headteacher, priest, staff and governors share a clear vision for the mission of the church in school. The headteacher is highly regarded as a role model by all staff, priest and governors as instrumental in promoting an authentic Catholic ethos in school and in the community. The parish priest said, 'Everyone benefits from the Catholic Life of this school; it is humbling to witness it'.
- The headteacher is a visible role model in school and in the local parish. Over recent years the school has developed successful strategies to engage parents, carers and parishioners. Parents support the school's mission, believe the Catholic ethos is very powerful and are willingly engaged.
- Leaders conduct a range of monitoring activities including questionnaires. The analysis provides an accurate diagnosis of the strengths and areas for development.
- Governors are knowledgeable of the school and influential in determining the direction of the school. The parish priest described how governors both support and challenge the headteacher to be authentic to the Church's mission in education.

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.

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

- Pupils' involvement in Collective Worship is an important part of the prayer life of the school and begins in reception class when they join together in 'family groups' to lead worship with pupils of all ages from across the school on a weekly basis. Pupils are reverent, respectful and joyful as they increasingly take responsibility in a range of acts of Collective Worship. Pupils also participate in voluntary prayer sessions such as praying the Rosary during October.
- Dependent upon their age, pupils take on more responsibility with the most experienced pupils in year six independently planning, preparing and leading Collective Worship for key stage pupils on a weekly basis. The key stage two pupils participating in the worship respond with reverence throughout this prayerful experience.
- Pupils have a good understanding of religious seasons and festivals and are able to talk about how they plan for these. Pupils planned a liturgy based on Mary and the month of May and could describe other examples of liturgies they have led.
- Interest in and respect for other faiths was clearly articulated by pupils and parents who were very supportive of children learning about and celebrating the festivals of other religions such as Divali.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is good.

- There are opportunities for staff and pupils to pray together during the course of the day and week. Staff pray together and this has a positive impact on the school's sense of being a 'family community'.
- Parents and parishioners are proud to be invited to participate in acts of worship both in school and in the local church. Attendance has increased significantly over the last three years and the school reports that 'there is standing room only' at some celebrations particularly during the season of Lent, Easter or Christmas.
- The cycle of Collective Worship is centred on the Church's liturgical year as well as including key themes and celebrations related to the school and school life. For example, after the bereavement of a member of staff, pupils were able to celebrate the life of that person and appreciate vocation and the sharing of gifts through liturgy, quiet reflection and prayer time. They wrote prayers and planted a tree to symbolise new life.
- Pupils and staff are proud of the 'Prayer Room', a dedicated space where pupils may go to reflect quietly at points throughout the day or to create a prayer to put on the prayer tree for others to read.

- As a result of the investment in books, resources, artefacts and music available for pupils and adults to use, Collective Worship is well resourced.

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

- All staff have benefitted from training and know how to plan and deliver quality experiences of Collective Worship.
- The views of pupils and parents are sought regularly and leaders monitor the quality of Collective Worship on a regular basis. Their views are highly valued and this information provides the basis for improvement planning which the headteacher includes in school self-evaluation. The headteacher has extended the range of prayer opportunities for pupils inside school.
- The headteacher and staff regularly lead Collective Worship in school. The headteacher and other staff lead by example and are often a visible presence at Mass on Sundays in both local parishes. Similarly, the headteacher leads Collective Worship in church for both pupils and parishioners.
- Leaders ensure that the pupils have excellent sacramental preparation working closely with the parish priest and catechists.

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

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

- Pupils speak very positively about their learning in Religious Education, enjoy their lessons and are keen to improve and achieve. For example, pupils described Religious Education as one of their favourite lessons. They talked about enjoying stories from the Bible, learning about other faiths and opportunities to learn at first hand including a visit to Durham for the Lindisfarne Gospels.
- Behaviour for learning is good and there were no disruptions to lessons.
- Pupils in all classes work eagerly, ask relevant questions and work independently when appropriate. They accurately apply their knowledge and relate their learning to their own lives. For example in class four, the pupils were learning about 'witnessing' and were able to give concrete examples of themselves 'witnessing' in their school, family and community lives.
- Evidence around the school and in books demonstrates the wide range of skills pupils develop through their engagement with Religious Education. For example, younger pupils were able to talk about Jesus' ascension and use their imagination to describe how Jesus' friends felt. Older pupils were able to reflect and evaluate on Lydia's conversion (Acts) and what they could learn from that.
- Pupils enter the school with knowledge and skills well below those expected for their age. Good progress is evident in books and most pupils are able to explain what they have learned and how they have improved over time.

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

- Teaching is mainly good and achievement and effort are celebrated. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge.
- The 'Come and See' programme is used effectively and teachers access diocesan resources to support their teaching.
- The majority of pupils are making good progress and some are making very good progress. Evidence in books shows good progress over time.
- Teachers secure good learning in lessons through differentiated planning, using a range of resources and teaching strategies. For example, groups of pupils across all classes were observed to be involved in using research materials, group discussions, images and craft work. Reception pupils made models of Jesus ascending to heaven and were able to describe what they had learned.
- Teachers ensure they check pupils understanding throughout lessons and then adapt

teaching to ensure all pupils make progress. In class four the teacher questioned the year five and year six pupils to check they were accessing the range of resources available to ensure rapid progress in their task related to the conversion of Lydia.

- The standard of feedback in books is variable. Marking is frequent and very positive but pupils are not always given constructive advice as to how to improve their work or the opportunity to do so.
- There is evidence of pupils using 'I can' statements however this is not consistent across the school. Teachers do not moderate their assessments within school, consequently the accuracy of assessment and therefore progress is inconsistent.

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

- Leaders carry out regular monitoring of teaching and work scrutiny. The evaluation of this ensures that key areas for improvement are identified and then tackled. For example, recent improvements to the quality of teaching are a direct result of actions taken by the leadership team to eradicate underperformance. Another example is that the leadership team introduced a tracking system to measure pupil progress but a cycle of moderation has not been included.
- All staff share common goals and effective teaching of Religious Education has a high priority within the school. The headteacher, Religious Education coordinator and specialist governor are well informed about current developments in Religious Education and jointly enthuse and motivate staff to ensure that all efforts are employed to good effect.
- Recent improvements to assessment include the introduction of more consistent tracking across classes and groups. However the school does not have a programme of regular in-house moderation of assessment.
- The school works closely with the parish catechists to ensure that sacramental preparation is in accordance with diocesan policy.
- Provision for Religious Education is comparable with other core subjects in terms of staffing, curriculum resourcing, capitation and curriculum time. It meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

HOW EFFECTIVE THE SCHOOL IS IN PROVIDING CATHOLIC EDUCATION:

2

CATHOLIC LIFE:

2

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

2

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.

2

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:

2

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

2

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

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

2

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	Our Lady Star of the Sea
Unique reference number	114281
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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Head teacher	Miss J Jones
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