

DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**  
SPIRITUALITY, FORMATION & EDUCATION SERVICE



**St Paul's RCVA Middle School  
Alnwick, Northumberland**

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION  
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE  
SCHOOL AND RELIGIOUS  
EDUCATION**

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<b>School:</b>	St Paul's RCVA Middle School
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<b>School URN:</b>	122372
<b>Head teacher:</b>	Mrs Maria Wilson
<b>Chair of Governors:</b>	Mrs Pam Slater
<b>Lead Inspector:</b>	Mrs Pat Witte
<b>Team Inspector:</b>	Mrs Eileen Lawson
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	6 and 7 December 2011

This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Séamus Cunningham the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese, (c.f. Code Canon Law, 804, 806), and for the Governing Body of the school (Education Act 2005, Section 48). The inspection reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school's witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

The inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Paul's is smaller than most schools. It changed its name from Thomas Percy RCVA Middle School in 2010, when it moved to a new site which it shares with St Paul's RCVA First School. It accepts pupils of all denominations from schools in the local and surrounding areas. Almost all pupils come from a White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is around average although above average numbers have statements of special educational needs.

The executive headteacher was the headteacher of the First School and took responsibility for the leadership of the Middle School in September 2011. The school became federated with St. Paul's RCVA First School from 1 November 2011 and now has a joint governing body.

## **FACTUAL INFORMATION**

### **Pupil Catchment:**

Number of pupils on roll: 162

Planned Admission Number of Pupils: 50

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 57%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 34%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 3%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 6%

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 3%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 20%

### **RE Department Staffing:**

Number of full time RE teachers: 4

Number of part time RE teachers: 0

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 54%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 27%

### **Percentage of learning time given to RE:**

Yr5 10%

Yr 6 10%

Yr7 10%

Yr8 10%

### **Parishes served by the school:**

St Paul's RC Church, Alnwick

The Sacred Heart and St Cuthbert's RC Church, Amble

St Thomas of Canterbury. Longhorsley

St Mary Immaculate, Whittingham

St Ninian, Wooler

St Aidan, Seahouses

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**How Effective the school is in providing Catholic Education**

2

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

2

### MAIN FINDINGS

St Paul's is a good Catholic school with many outstanding features. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding and the focus is on the development of the whole child. The Gospel values of care and respect for all in the community are paramount with a strong emphasis on inclusion. Pupils feel safe and able to approach adults when they need to. Collective worship is outstanding, enabling children to participate whilst providing opportunities for beliefs to be expressed and shared. St Paul's makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion and partnerships. The new federated governing body is highly supportive of the school and they discharge their responsibilities effectively in terms of the Catholic foundation of the school. Although provision for Religious Education is satisfactory overall, standards are not yet high enough and are variable at key stage two (KS2) and key stage three (KS3). Target setting, assessment and pupil tracking are areas for improvement. Teaching and learning is good with a range of styles and strategies. The curriculum for Religious Education is satisfactory but there is a lack of structure in the scheme at KS3. There are now planned developments in place to improve standards in both key stages to enable pupils to make appropriate progress.

### **The school has a good capacity to improve further.**

The new executive headteacher and senior leadership team are fully aware of the strengths and areas for development. Raising achievement is a priority and action is now being taken to address this which will sharpen the drive within teaching and learning to enable pupils to make progress according to their prior attainment and ability. The school improvement plan is in development with a clear vision for improvement. Monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life of the school informally takes place but more formal methods should be implemented in order to support an effective self-evaluation process. The senior leaders in the school share a commitment to raising standards and to improving the quality of teaching and learning within Religious Education. The headteacher has identified monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education as a priority in order to drive standards.

### **What the school needs to do to improve further:**

- embed procedures for assessment, target setting and tracking to enhance pupil progress in Religious Education;
- develop an effective self-evaluation process for the Catholic life of the school and Religious Education which would support accurate judgements and action planning;
- establish a scheme of work in Religious Education at KS3 to enhance rigorous assessment and pupil progress.

## PUPILS

3

### **How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups**

Pupils enjoy their learning in Religious Education. However on the whole, the standards that they achieve are not high enough when set against their capability and starting points. There is underperformance, particularly amongst the more able and so pupils do not make expected progress. Attainment across the key stages is variable, at the end of KS2 attainment is average and by the end of year eight attainment is low with no pupils working beyond level five. Pupils are gaining some knowledge, skills and understanding of religion (Attainment Target One) and some ability to reflect on meaning (Attainment Target Two). However, the school has accurately identified that the schemes of work and assessment at KS3 do not allow them to make satisfactory gains which leads to underachievement. Strategies are now in place to address this and there is a recent and evident trend of improvement. These strategies need time to become more firmly established in order to take root and enable pupils to make more sustained improvement over a longer period of time. There is some evidence of target-setting in KS3, but practice is not yet consistent and has been identified as an area for development. There is evidence of good progress levels by pupils who have special educational needs; they are supported well in the learning process through planning and differentiation.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school and benefit greatly from it. They willingly take on responsibilities and enthusiastically participate in activities within and beyond the school. Pupils are confident when expressing their own beliefs and are understanding and respectful of those with beliefs different to their own. They understand the importance of key celebrations throughout the liturgical year and in the parish community. Pupils value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and benefit greatly from the chaplaincy offered to them by the headteacher, staff and a very dedicated volunteer chaplain. They are considerate to others and respond extremely well to the needs of people beyond the school. They understand the need for forgiveness and have a good understanding of what is right and wrong.

Pupils response to and participation in collective worship is outstanding. They take part in, lead and prepare prayer and liturgy with confidence, enthusiasm and ease. Acts of worship enable pupils to develop their spirituality in a wide variety of ways. Pupils and staff participate in voluntary opportunities for lunch time prayer services in the newly developed school chapel. In both small and large gatherings pupils are respectful, reverent, reflective and prayerful. They have a good understanding of the religious seasons and are skilled in the use of scripture, religious artefacts, hymns and other forms of prayer. Pupils understand what constitutes good worship. Collective worship contributes positively to the spiritual and moral development of pupils.

## PROVISION

### How effective the provision is for Catholic education

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is effective in ensuring that pupils are consistently interested in their learning. A good range of teaching styles and strategies, well paced lessons and good use of ICT ensure that the pupils are engaged, motivated and well behaved. Good questioning techniques are employed to extend pupils' learning. Teachers in both key stages have good subject knowledge which inspires, motivates and enhances pupils' enjoyment of Religious Education. However, differentiation is not sufficiently developed across the school to enable pupils, especially the more able pupils, to attain higher levels of progress and attainment.

The effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education is satisfactory. Targets are set and pupils generally know how well they are achieving and how to improve. The Headteacher and leadership team have however accurately identified areas to support pupil progress such as the need for more developed procedures for assessment, target setting and tracking as strategies to raise attainment. However, these strategies are at the early stages of implementation and are only just beginning to make an impact on raising standards. Regular moderation of pupil work is identified as a tool to ensure accurate assessment and guidance for more able pupils.

The Religious Education curriculum provided is satisfactory overall in meeting the needs and interests of pupils, though there are some good features. It meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference with regard to curriculum time and the process of assessment is in line with diocesan guidance. However, the lack of a structured scheme in KS3 prohibits the pupils from attaining the appropriate knowledge and skills needed to make appropriate progress and attain higher levels of attainment. The curriculum is increasingly enriched by creative approaches and cross curricular links such as Religious Education through art. The Religious Education curriculum contributes very well to the spiritual and moral development of all pupils.

The quality of collective worship is outstanding. It is central to the life of the school and is given the highest priority. Acts of worship are well planned, vibrant and reflective with active participation by pupils. The range, variety and quality of prayer styles and prayer opportunities offered to pupils is exceptional. They make good use of the school chapel at lunch times and there are plans to offer reflective prayer opportunities before the school day begins. The school chaplain demonstrates a high level of skill, imagination and creativity in leading worship, providing an excellent role model for staff and pupils. The school's very high quality provision is inclusive and ensures the spiritual needs of the pupils are very well met.

## LEADERS AND MANAGERS

1

### **How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school**

The promotion and development of the Catholic life of the school by leaders and managers is outstanding. The Catholic mission of the school is a priority and this vision is shared by governors, staff and pupils. All members of the community are actively involved in shaping and supporting the mission. Although there is little evidence of formal monitoring and evaluation, the headteacher and senior leaders are able to identify the strengths and areas for development in the Catholic life of the school. It is recognised that this is an area for development as an effective self-evaluation process would aid review of provision and action planning. Many aspects of the life of the school could be harnessed to aid the process.

The monitoring and evaluation of the provision for Religious Education by leaders and managers is satisfactory. They know the strengths and areas for development in the quality of teaching and learning and the progress of different groups of pupils. Plans are in place to improve outcomes and enhance the progress of more able pupils. Systems for the formal monitoring and evaluation of performance in Religious Education are in their infancy and need to become more firmly embedded in order to build on improving attainment trends.

Governors provide effective challenge and support regarding the Catholic life of the school. They are extremely committed, have a good understanding of the schools' strengths and areas for development and put the well-being and development of the whole child at the centre of their work. Governors discharge their statutory and canonical duties well and are very supportive of leaders and staff. They appreciate and acknowledge the vital role the school chaplain plays in enhancing and enriching the Catholic life of the school. Governors are actively involved in the school community and have worked extremely hard to establish a new federated school. They are well informed on matters relating to Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school and know the priority is to raise standards in Religious Education across the school.

Leaders and managers are extremely successful at developing partnerships with other providers and organisations. The school is involved in a wide range of partnerships such as the Youth Mission Team, which impact significantly on pupils' achievement and well-being and to the Catholic life of the school. Well established links with other Catholic schools, the diocese, the parish and other local organisations provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to enjoy and achieve as well as promoting the personal and professional development of staff.

Leaders and managers are highly effective in promoting community cohesion. Governors, staff and pupils speak very highly of the inclusive nature of St Paul's school. There are strong channels of communication between all members of the community who feel valued and listened to. Respect and tolerance are promoted throughout the school and this is evident in the quality of relationships. Difference is valued and celebrated ensuring that the most vulnerable feel part of the community. Pupils are keen to fulfil their responsibilities as global citizens and do so in a variety of fund raising events. The Religious Education programme and the school's collective worship both recognise similarities and differences with other faiths, with the aim of promoting tolerance of other beliefs and cultures.

## SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

**Key for inspection grades:**

Grade 1   **Outstanding**      Grade 2   **Good**      Grade 3   **Satisfactory**      Grade 4   **Unsatisfactory**

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The school's capacity for sustained improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ pupils' attainment in Religious Education</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school</li> </ul>	<b>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship</li> </ul>	<b>1</b>
<b>How effective the provision is for Catholic Education</b>	<b>3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the quality of collective worship provided by the school</li> </ul>	<b>1</b>
<b>How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School</b>	<b>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils</li> </ul>	<b>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well-being</li> </ul>	<b>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion</li> </ul>	<b>1</b>