



St Bede's Catholic School and Sixth Form College

Consett Road, Lanchester, County Durham, DH7 0RD

School Unique Reference Number: **138172**

Inspection dates:	16 – 17 March 2015
Lead inspector:	Tony McCourt
Team inspector:	Mike Shorten

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

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Bede's Catholic School and Sixth Form College is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- The overall effectiveness of the school is outstanding. The development of the Catholic Life of the school is given the highest priority. The school's mission is tangible in the physical environment, relationships of mutual respect and trust, the many opportunities for prayer and worship and the high standards in Religious Education.
- The quality of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding because St Bede's meets its aim to be a community inspired by Christ to serve others, in a climate of kindness, humility, friendship and cooperation. Christ's message of faith, hope and love, as articulated by St Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, guides and supports the school community. Catholic values, attitudes, practice and knowledge energise the life of the school.
- The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding because of the high levels of engagement of pupils who design and respond to inspirational acts of worship. Collective Worship is integral to the everyday life of the school as witnessed at the start and end of the school day. Pupils participate actively and respond reverently, staff engage with enthusiasm and confidence and senior leaders demonstrate their witness through their daily high profile presence in acts of worship.
- The quality of Religious Education is outstanding because the progress and attainment of pupils at all levels is exceptional. Pupils are motivated to develop spiritually and put their faith into action in their daily lives. The subject leader and his team are committed to outstanding outcomes, supported and challenged by the school leadership. Teaching is good to outstanding, leading to outstanding outcomes.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Bede's is a larger than average Catholic secondary school located in the rural district of Derwentside, north west Durham.
- Pupils come from a wide spectrum of social and economic backgrounds, many travelling from disparate towns and villages.
- The proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities is below average as is the number eligible for pupil premium.
- Numbers of pupils supported through school action and school action plus and through statements of special or additional educational need is below average.
- The number of looked after pupils is the highest for any secondary school in the county.
- St Bede's converted to an academy in June 2012 and became a teaching school in September 2014. The headteacher is a national leader in education.
- St Bede's is a founder member of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle partnership of schools.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Continue to increase A level uptake by:
 - further develop strategies to increase and maintain numbers on sixth form Religious Education courses
- Ensure the consistency of outstanding lessons by:
 - continuing to develop effective differentiated tasks and resources across the Religious Education department to support access to content for all students

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.

- All members of St Bede's have a deep sense of belonging to an outstanding Catholic school. Opportunities to promote the school's ethos within school and in the wider community are enthusiastically embraced. From the start, pupils entering St Bede's come together to celebrate the spiritual focus of school life and to offer the gifts they bring to the community.
- Pupils are aware of and help shape the mission of the school. They are actively involved in evaluating the Catholic Life of the school and contribute to devising plans for improvement.
- Behaviour is at all times exemplary. Pupils listen attentively, show appreciation, know how to forgive and accept forgiveness and celebrate the achievements of others.
- St Bede's is a happy school where pupils develop spiritually and emotionally, growing in confidence in a community where they feel secure and supported.
- Service to others is an integral part of school life. Pupils use their talents to help the needy in their local community and abroad. This is exemplified by the Food4U initiative, Christmas hampers for the elderly and working visits to Sri Lanka and Costa Rica
- Almost all pupils, including those who are not Catholic, have a strong sense of their religious identity, respecting the beliefs of others. The Catholic tradition of the school is respected and valued by those who study and work in the school. This is particularly evident in the comments of those coming new into the sixth form.
- Sixth form students have the opportunity to volunteer as ambassadors to promote themselves as role models, exhibit positive personal qualities, assist in the smooth running of the school and represent the school in the local community.

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

- The mission statement, based on the acronym CHRIST, is the inspiration for the school community to live out the educational mission of the Church, in service to the common good, in all aspects of the life of the school.
- The headteacher works tirelessly with the deputy headteacher and senior leaders to ensure the best Catholic education for all – motivated by a desire to provide for the pupils of St Bede's the enriching experiences they would want for their own families.
- The quality of Catholic Life in the school is tangible through all relationships, leading to a supportive and joyful community. The celebration of St Patrick's feast, during the inspection, was led by an Irish teacher with a traditional Irish hymn and inspirational

readings and commentary. Staff and pupils are friendly and engaging as visitors move around the buildings.

- St Bede's is proudly Catholic, so evident in the main entrance where displays of religious art and eye-catching religious symbols create an atmosphere of calm and welcome. An audio visual commentary on a Lenten theme was a gentle reminder of the liturgical season.

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

- The provision of the Catholic Life of the school is given the highest priority by school leaders. It is the primary focus of the school's planning for improvement and is the starting point from which all other development points emanate.
- Senior leaders have a visible presence in the Catholic Life of the school and are leading on well targeted planned improvements, systematically reviewing the impact of initiatives on the religious life of the school.
- Staff are aware of and accept the high expectations demanded of them. Senior leaders, leading by example derived from Gospel values, provide encouragement and support to meet staff personal and professional needs. Staff express appreciation for the care received especially at times of loss or adversity.
- Governors know the school well and are active in all aspects of school life. They are passionate about the school's mission and engage fully in sustaining the vibrant Catholic Life of the school.
- Staff and pupils' understanding of the school's mission is outstanding. Strategies to support further developments are formed following a consultative process including staff, students and parent focus groups.

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.

- High quality Collective Worship engages the interests of all pupils and ensures prayerful and respectful participation. The various events documented in 'Grow in Faith Together' (GIFT) bear witness to the range of opportunity for worship.
- Pupils engage in all acts of worship in a highly respectful and reverent manner. Pupils express their appreciation for the opportunities afforded to them to be reflective and prayerful.
- Pupils willingly and creatively participate with the chaplaincy team in designing and resourcing the community life of prayer appropriate to their age and ability.
- Pupils are well versed in a multiplicity of prayer forms. They are confident and comfortable with various prayer gatherings, showing a maturity and respect for liturgical traditions and modern interpretations. They are visibly inspired by contributions from fellow pupils, including public performances of music and readings.
- The praying community of St Bede's has a tangible impact on the development of all pupils irrespective of ability or faith backgrounds. Pupils are confident enough to celebrate difference and act with sincerity. Pupils from various faith backgrounds acknowledge their appreciation to be able to contribute significantly to Collective Worship together. A singer and guitar player, for example, created a very reflective atmosphere for a memorable sixth form assembly.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- The day at St Bede's starts and ends with prayer for all pupils and staff. Collective Worship is central to the daily and weekly calendar. It is creatively planned and is fundamental to the routine of the school community.
- The highly experienced chaplain is instrumental in working with the school community to provide experiences of Collective Worship which are high quality and universally appealing. Themes chosen for worship reflect a deep understanding of the liturgical season and the Church's mission in education.
- Pupils value the opportunities for high quality Collective Worship, responding in a prayerful and engaging manner. Such is their level of enthusiasm and appreciation that pupils have requested more frequent opportunities to worship together.
- The community is open and welcoming. Governors and parents attend Collective Worship in line with the school calendar. Such is the confidence in their acquired skills that pupils go

out and contribute to worship in their own parishes on occasions such as Youth Sunday.

- The recently developed chaplaincy team is supporting the chaplain in providing resources for class teachers, leading a wide variety of different forms of worship such as class Masses, year assemblies and form prayers.

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

- Senior leaders are highly visible in Collective Worship around the school; they are models of outstanding practice, giving meaningful, relevant and inspirational presentations.
- Senior leaders place Catholic ethos as an essential aspect of professional development. Recent training for all staff has included high quality delivery by the pastoral and hospitality retreat leader of Ampleforth, the head of the department for Spirituality of the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and a partnership wide event at the SAGE.
- The views of the community, including pupils and parents, are listened to and responded to in a systematic and thorough way
- Continuous improvement is an important motivator of the school self-evaluation processes relating to Catholic ethos. In their regular reviews of school performance, senior leaders look to enhance Collective Worship at all levels.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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- 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 outstanding.

- Pupils of all ages value their Religious Education lessons. They articulate and demonstrate that they have a commitment to the values and skills they learn. They appreciate the time spent on balanced discussions and the time given to them to reflect on the opinions of others. They are consistently studious, focused and engaged in lessons. The depth of discussion was demonstrated by the year seven students asking some very challenging questions.
- Most pupils concentrate throughout their lessons and are rarely seen off task. Behaviour is outstanding and nearly all lessons are unaffected by interruptions. The level of commitment of students in general Religious Education lessons is exceptional. The clarity and purpose of the wide variety of projects appeals to and engages students in purposeful learning opportunities.
- The three year rising trend in student numbers recruited to advanced level Religious Studies is a true reflection of the value students give to the quality and enjoyment in the subject.
- All pupils know their targets and are focused on making progress through lessons. Attainment at key stage four over the past three years is well above diocesan and national averages.

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

- The teaching of religious education at St Bedes is highly effective and almost all pupils are making good progress.
- Teachers have confidence and high levels of subject knowledge which they use to great effect when questioning pupils to develop depth and enthusiasm. A wide range of high quality teaching resources are used by teachers and shared within the department.
- A wide range of teaching strategies are used across the year groups. The quality and consistency of differentiation within lessons is variable and is an area of development for the department. Greater consistency of differentiation across all lessons would provide even better access to learning.
- The quality of marking and assessment in books and the green pen response by the pupils are consistent and highly detailed across the year groups. Pupils appreciate the level of support and clarity of targets.
- Homework is regularly set and develops naturally as an extension of classroom learning.

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

- The leadership of Religious Education is very strong. The head of department has made a significant impact on vision and strategies over the past three years. The department is effectively supported and challenged by the senior link leader.
- The monitoring of pupil engagement and progress involves both internal and external mechanisms. Leaders have used this data to target planning and inform strategic decisions taken by the department, leading to outstanding outcomes in education.
- Leadership in Religious Education inspires confidence in both teachers and pupils, often resulting in teaching that is outstanding and at least consistently good.
- Religious Education has a very high profile in the life of the school. There is a profound impact on the moral and spiritual development of pupils which influences their choice of vocation. A year eleven student, with aspirations to become a Religious Education teacher, is included in some Religious Education department planning sessions. The department participates in Green Light, a school initiative to showcase good practice in the classroom.
- Curriculum planning is imaginatively designed and provides an outstanding range of enrichment activities to match the full range of pupil needs. Rigorous departmental reviews have led to cohesive programmes of study across the age range.
- The Religious Education department works closely with senior leadership and chaplaincy teams to ensure high quality liturgical experiences.
- Religious Education enjoys similar resourcing to other key departments in the school. Curriculum time dedicated to religious studies meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference when all Religious Education activities are included. The requirement will be further met by incorporating additional time in each key stage in the next academic year.
- The curriculum enables pupils to gain first hand memorable experiences of the liturgical life of the Catholic Church and a wide diversity of religious and belief communities such as the neighbouring Methodist Church and the Islamic Diversity Centre.
- Sacramental preparation is fully resourced and creatively managed by the chaplain.

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.

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

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

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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**1**

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

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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.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**1**

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

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The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

1

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

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SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Bede's Catholic School and Sixth Form College
Unique reference number	138172
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	Mr Neville Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	March 2009
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