



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Robert's Catholic First School, Morpeth

URN: 148999

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev Malcolm McMahon, Archbishop of Liverpool and Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle on:

Date: 20-21 April 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	2
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.....	2
Collective worship (p.7) The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....	2
The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Partially

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- Pupils are well nurtured and highly valued; they are known and loved.
- Families are warmly welcomed and are an integral part of the school community; they are recognised as the primary educators.
- Pupils with additional needs are supported to have equitable access to the curriculum.
- Pupils generously undertake charitable acts as they fully recognise their responsibility to serve others, notably those most in need.

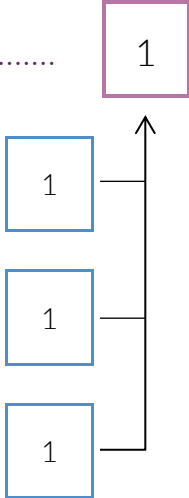
What the school needs to improve:

- Develop systematic professional development experiences so that staff have a thorough subject knowledge and a deep understanding of how to assess in relation to age-related expectations in order to consistently plan challenging lessons.
- Increase the rigour of monitoring procedures to ensure that there are opportunities in all religious education lessons for pupils to be challenged.
- Develop pupils' skills further so that they can create imaginative prayer spaces and liturgical prayer experiences that include creative ways to pray as well as those steeped in the Catholic tradition, ensuring pupils plan, lead and evaluate liturgical prayer as they progress through the school.

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:.....	1
Pupil outcomes The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school	1
Provision The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school	1
Leadership How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school	1



Pupil outcomes in Catholic life and mission are outstanding because pupils understand and embrace the distinctive Catholic identity and mission of their school. They have a strong sense of belonging and recognise that they are valued and cared for; they are happy, confident and feel secure. Pupils understand that the school community is committed to following the teaching and example of Jesus and can describe how they serve those in need. Pupils confidently talk about their charitable links and fundraising efforts and understand that this is about being agents for change. This is evidenced in their campaign involving the local MP to reduce single use plastic in school. When asked why they actively participate in and contribute to these opportunities provided by the school, one pupil responded, 'It is good to give, but giving is not just about giving money. We can give time and ideas too'. Pupils behave well in lessons and throughout the school. They show a clear sense of respect for others and recognise that their behaviour impacts on those around them. Pupils gladly embrace their personal responsibility to care for our common home and are proud to contribute to the wider life of the school community, for the good of others.

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school is outstanding because the mission statement, 'We care, we serve, we learn together in the love and truth of Jesus,' is clear and known. Staff ensure that pupils understand that the school '6 Bees,' of Be respectful; Be honest; Be responsible; Be kind; Be spiritual and Be the best that you can be, are the ways in which all can live out the school's mission, and regularly refer to this. Staff consistently bear witness to the school's Catholic life and mission and are exemplary role models for the pupils. This is evident in their care, compassion, pastoral support, and the quality of their relationships with pupils, parents and each other. This embedded culture means that the school celebrates and values everyone in their community without exception. Staff ensure that they embrace inclusivity and understand individual needs. They are committed to provide exceptional support, notably for those in most need. The school environment witnesses to its identity through explicit signs of its Catholic character. This is

evident in the displays present in classrooms and communal areas. The provision for relationships, sex and health education is planned to ensure that it meets statutory and diocesan requirements.

Leaders are outstanding in the ways in which they promote and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission at St Robert's. They ensure that Christ is at the heart of the school. Because the head teacher invests a significant amount of time in developing relationships with families, he understands their context and is determined in his efforts to serve the community. Parents report that he is inspirational in his commitment to support them as primary educators and they recognise that he is well supported by his colleagues. Parents value the 'family environment' where 'everyone is very caring and fair.' Leaders and governors work hard to build an effective partnership between the school and its local parish. They show a clear respect for the dignity of workers and are committed in their care for the wellbeing of staff. Staff therefore feel well supported and affirmed. Policies and procedures reflect the Catholic identity of the school and self-evaluation processes prioritise the Catholic mission of the school. Leaders endeavour to 'poverty proof' school activities and therefore ensure that there are equitable opportunities for all.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2

Pupils enjoy religious education lessons. Because they are enthused, they engage well and sustain concentration. Consequently, pupil outcomes in religious education are good. Verbal feedback is given during lessons. Pupils can articulate how adults support their learning. From their starting points, pupils make expected progress. They respond well to given tasks and work is presented with care. However, the tasks do not yet provide greater challenge to allow pupils to apply higher order skills and knowledge across all lessons, and so embed age-related standards with confidence. Pupils with additional needs achieve well because lessons are appropriately adapted to enable them to access the curriculum. Pupils have a knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and traditions and can reflect on what they have been taught. Across the school pupils use a developing religious vocabulary. By the end of Year 4, pupils can express an opinion, recognising that their learning can influence their actions. A Year 4 pupil commented, 'When Peter denied Jesus three times I learned that sometimes, when we are afraid, we do wrong. This is ok because we try to learn from our mistakes'. Parents appreciate the impact of religious education on their children. One parent stated, 'The value of religious education is that it is brought through into the everyday life of the pupils.'

The provision of religious education is good because teachers are committed, generating enthusiasm for the subject in their pupils. They work hard to plan and deliver lessons, adapting teaching to support inclusion. Tasks are varied and creative, allowing pupils with differing needs and strengths to engage with the learning. There is a strong fidelity to the Come and See programme, which is used to deliver the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory, 2012*. However, heavy reliance on the programme's suggested tasks can limit the level of pupils' personal responses, which impacts on pupil progress. Because teachers are encouraging, pupils contribute well in lessons. Staff provide opportunities for reflection and, consequently, pupils can describe their thinking, using some religious vocabulary. Parents value the quality of education that staff provide.

One parent remarked, 'St Robert's is a wonderful school...My daughter talks to us at home about what she has learned and how much she has enjoyed her religious education lessons.' Staff value opportunities to reflect on the quality of religious education teaching across the school, although the subject's professional development programme lacks structure. Therefore, not all staff have deep subject knowledge or an in-depth understanding of age-related standards.

The leadership of religious education is good because the head teacher has embedded clear policies and procedures across the school that support effective teaching. Leaders ensure that the religious education curriculum is compliant with the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory, 2012*, and with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. They monitor the quality of teaching of religious education. When standards are lower than expected, they develop a plan to address concerns. New members of staff have induction support and benefit from staff collaboration. Staff feel well supported by leaders who affirm their work. The head teacher has re-established moderation of standards with local schools, to ensure that every lesson provides challenging learning opportunities. Members of the local governing committee are regular visitors to school, they receive a termly religious education report from the head teacher, and they are well informed when making decisions. They have also commissioned external monitoring reports to ensure their review is rigorous and accurate. They have ensured that religious education lessons are well-resourced, and they prioritise time allocated for leaders to monitor. They ensure that support staff are deployed to support learning effectively.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

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

2

Prayer is part of the rhythm of the school day. Pupils participate reverently and enthusiastically, singing joyfully and joining in with communal prayers. Church traditions are embedded and enriched with creative opportunities to pray. Therefore, outcomes for pupils are good. Appropriate to their age, pupils undertake ministries with confidence. They contribute to the planning of liturgical prayer so that by Year 4 they can demonstrate some independence in planning and leading liturgical prayer for their peers. They can respond to the range of creative prayer experiences offered to them as these are meaningful. They enjoy the opportunity to explore a variety of prayer styles in their own prayer journals. They can describe the liturgical year and recognise how this is reflected in prayer experiences offered to them. They enjoy opportunities to act in response to liturgical prayer. One pupil commented, 'Our mission today is to tell people about Pentecost because the Good News is for everyone.' Pupils commented that they enjoyed leading liturgical prayer for the parish groups and feel these opportunities, 'Help us to grow closer to God. Jesus is a holy man and we celebrate that.'

Staff provide varied prayer opportunities and consequently pupils can develop their personal spirituality. As well as celebrating class and whole-school liturgical prayer, groups of pupils join the parish to celebrate Mass each week. The provision for prayer and liturgy is good and the parish community recognises the valued contribution staff make in supporting the spiritual growth of pupils. Staff lead prayer and liturgy, acting as role models for pupils. Staff also enable pupils to plan liturgical prayer, so that they develop some independence, in line with their age and capacity. Adults create prayerful foci in classrooms and in shared areas. These provide opportunities for pupils to respond and reflect, and they support pupils' understanding of the liturgical year. Because pupils are encouraged to explore a variety of ways to pray, they can respond in their own preferred way of praying. Staff help pupils to develop their relationship with God in many ways and the spiritual growth of all is sensitively supported. Staff ensure that families feel included in the prayer life of the school and invitations to join their children in prayer are valued by parents. One parent commented,

'To be part of worship in school is life-enhancing.' In partnership with the parish of St Robert of Newminster, some pupils in Year 4 are prepared for receiving the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. Parents welcome this partnership and would like to seek further opportunities for pupils to be involved in the prayer life of the parish community.

School leaders ensure that the prayer life of the school is meaningful and joyful. The head teacher is a role model for staff in the planning and leading of prayer and liturgy and ensures that the school's prayer and liturgy policy is relevant. Consequently, staff can lead, and support pupils to lead, liturgical prayer. Senior leaders ensure that liturgical prayer is celebrated during professional development days. Staff welcome these opportunities and would value additional training so that they can build up the pupils' skills of participation and planning as they progress through school. The head teacher is inspirational in engaging with families. One parent commented, 'He knows every child and their story,' and he uses this knowledge of the community to plan prayerful celebrations of significant moments. Governors recognise their responsibility to monitor and review the prayer life of the school, regularly visiting as part of the self-evaluation cycle. They ensure that the prayer life of pupils is enhanced by parish partnerships, including sacramental opportunities.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Robert's Catholic First School
School unique reference number (URN)	148999
Full postal address of the school	Oldgate, Morpeth, NE61 1QF
School phone number	01670 512031
Name of head teacher or principal	David Sutcliffe
Chair of governing board	Fiona Swift
School Website	www.st-roberts.northumberland.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust
Type of school	First
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	3-9 years
Trustees	Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	7-8 June 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Barbara Reilly-O'Donnell

Lead inspector

Louise Maitland

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