



St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy

Ridge Terrace, Bedlington, Northumberland, NE22 6ED

School Unique Reference Number: **141814**

Inspection dates:	25 – 26 June 2015
Lead inspector:	Tony McCourt
Team inspector:	Pat Witte

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Collective Worship:		Good	2
Religious Education:		Requires Improvement	3

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy is a good Catholic school because:

- The school's mission 'to enable pupils to become what God intends them to be' is the driving force behind the school's Catholic Life, Collective Worship and Religious Education.
- The Catholic Life of the school encourages pupils 'to seek wholeness through faith, quest and learning'. Gospel values of love, forgiveness, reconciliation and respect build strong relationships in the community.
- Worship is an integral part of the daily routine of the school. Staff and pupils have worship at the centre of their school life. All members of the community lead prayer and reflection. Worship is used to celebrate key occasions throughout the year.
- Pupils are engaged and attentive in Religious Education and are keen to do well.

It is not yet outstanding because:

- Whilst pupils acquire knowledge and understanding over time, the pace of learning requires improvement. Where standards of groups of pupils are below diocesan and national averages the inspection indicated that significant efforts have been made to close the gaps.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy is a larger than average Catholic secondary school located in Bedlington, Northumberland.
 - Pupils come from a range of social and economic backgrounds, travelling from towns and villages in the surrounding area.
 - The proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities is well below average.
 - The number of pupils supported through school action and school action plus and statements of special or additional needs is below average.
 - The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium is below average.
 - St Benet Biscop Catholic High School converted to an academy in March 2015.
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WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- To improve the Catholic Life of the school by:
 - developing further the role of the recently appointed chaplain.
- To improve Collective Worship by:
 - exploring opportunities and locations for more frequent Masses.
- To improve Religious Education by:
 - ensuring pupils make rapid and sustained progress at each key stage;
 - moving the quality of teaching from good to outstanding.

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.

- The majority of pupils have a profound experience of belonging to the all-encompassing Catholic community of St Benet Biscop School. They willingly take an active role in order to promote the school's ethos through example, positive relationships, active involvement in prayer and liturgies and reaching out in charitable works to the wider community.
- The Restorative Justice Programme and Respect Code reinforce the Gospel values of tolerance and forgiveness and, as a consequence, pupils work confidently and effectively with each other, taking responsibility for their behaviour. There is a calm and orderly environment around the school which aids learning and pupil and staff interaction.
- The majority of pupils take full advantage of the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and spiritual formation. They are cheerful, self-assured, courteous and welcoming to visitors. During a year seven assembly on the theme of sharing, there was a tangible excitement and enjoyment but pupils also led a prayerful and respectful response when appropriate.
- The majority of pupils genuinely appreciate the benefits of being part of a vibrant Catholic community. They are proud of and value the outward signs of the school's Catholic identity, for example, creating religious art work for display around the school including the distinctive iconography in the main entrance and suggesting ideas for the development of the chapel.
- They enthusiastically join in a range of parish and diocesan activities: retreats at the Emmaus Centre, prayer, worship and socialising on the Flame Train and at the Source, participating in St Bede's parish council and providing benefits such as a tea party for senior citizens.
- Pupils help shape and evaluate the development of Catholic Life through student councils and meetings with the chaplain. Improvements are ongoing following detailed staff and pupil surveys of Catholic life.

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

- The school mission statement to 'Seek wholeness through faith, quest and learning to become what God intends us to be' underpins the provision of the Catholic life of the school. All staff work to implement the mission statement through example in their interaction with each other and leading daily prayer. They are actively involved in its promotion across the curriculum and school life in general by demanding high expectations

of pupils. The Catholic life of the school has a marked impact on standards of behaviour.

- The quality of relationships which exist between all members of the community is very strong. Staff talk about help and support received from senior leaders in times of personal stress and bereavement. Pupils value teachers having time for them. Sixth form pupils, new to St Benet Biscop School, commented favourably about the friendliness of staff and their peers.
- The school is demonstrably a supportive, welcoming and friendly community. Policies derived from Gospel values of care, charity, respect and forgiveness inform the pastoral programmes, PSHE and RSE to benefit all pupils. There is an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable and needy in the community particularly through the Leading Link initiative which plays a central role in the school community.

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

- The school's leadership are a source of inspiration for the whole community. They are deeply committed to developing and sustaining an authentic Catholic ethos. The senior leadership team are actively involved in the planning and delivery of acts of worship and have strong and effective links with the school chaplain.
- The school's planning priorities reflect the importance of Catholic life and are given the highest priority. The school improvement plan places the development of the Catholic life at the forefront of its commitment to strive for excellence.
- Rigorous monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge help the school to focus on its priorities for Catholic life and learning. This leads to planned improvements which are further enhancing the communal life and ethos of the school. The growing involvement of the chaplain with all year groups is resulting in a new energy in Catholic life.
- Staff speak extremely positively about the Catholic ethos of St Benet Biscop School and the rewarding impact on their working life and the pupils. Colleagues new to the school welcome the in-service training to develop understanding of the Church's mission in education.
- Parents are supportive of the school. It is a very popular choice in the local area leading to the current over-subscription.
- As leaders, the governing body are a significant influence for improving the Catholic life of the school. They are frequent visitors to the school on both formal and informal occasions and often join the pupils for lunch. They are actively involved in all aspects of school life. They receive reports at termly meetings and use the findings to challenge school leaders.

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.

- Acts of worship are enjoyed with reverence and keen participation. Pupils are enthused by frequent opportunities to participate in and plan acts of worship, for example, in form groups at the start of the day.
- Worship and prayers are regularly prepared by pupils who are confident in their delivery. Pictorial displays, music and videos are used to good effect. This was reflected in an engaging year group assembly.
- It is evident that there is a variety of approaches to prayer with some developing strategies. Staff are growing in confidence in the delivery of prayer, introducing music and other aids to support reflection and are ably supported by the chaplain. The weekly morning prayer in the chapel was enhanced through the use of creative art work of lotus flowers and inspirational music.
- Pupils are engaged by the worship opportunities planned by their peers because they create visual effects and use relevant music. They are appreciative of and inspired by the contributions of the chaplain, a willing and resourceful advisor for acts of worship.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is good.

- Staff and pupils pray together regularly and prayer is part of almost all school celebrations. The voluntary weekly morning prayer, attended and led by staff and pupils, is inspiring and reflective, and is an uplifting start to the school day.
- Collective Worship is anticipated and enjoyed by staff and pupils. Careful planning and appropriate resourcing ensures a meaningful spiritual experience. Pupils remember affectionately the celebration of Mass when starting the school and the annual Remembrance Day liturgy.
- The liturgical calendar is reflected in the prayer life of the school with appropriate reference to scripture.
- Pupils are supported in their delivery of quality worship by class teachers, pastoral tutors and the chaplain. This is an area which could be further developed to achieve high quality and consistent worship experiences.
- Logistical restrictions limit the number of Masses celebrated in the school but efforts are made to compensate through a range of liturgies, especially at significant times in the year. These are most evident at the major transition periods in the school year.

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

- Leaders and managers, including senior leaders and chaplain, know how to plan and deliver a range of experiences of collective worship. The celebration of Mass is infrequent currently but future planning will address this.
- Leaders understand the Church's liturgical year which is reflected throughout worship in the school. This is underpinned by the inclusion of the liturgical year in planning documents.
- Pertinent examples of faith in action, such as distributing small gifts of food to visitors in a year seven assembly, reinforce Gospel values of charity, sharing and mercy in a tangible and meaningful way to younger pupils.
- Collective Worship is regularly reviewed to improve its quality and provision by school leaders. The views of stakeholders for example sixth form students requested the greater use of the prayer room, are taken into account and used to inform further developments.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

3

- 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.

3

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2

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

- Most pupils enjoy Religious Education and can explain its value. During the observation of year 10 lessons, pupils expressed their interest and keenness to learn about ethical situations.
- Good behaviour for learning is enabling pupils to make some progress. Evidence of lesson observations indicated a high standard of behaviour for learning and the majority were engaged throughout the lessons.
- Pupils understand how well they have done and what they need to do to improve. Questioning of pupils indicated they were aware of prior learning and knew the steps to take to make progress. Year 12 students could articulate the steps to take their learning forward and this was evident in their use of philosophical concepts.
- Whilst some groups of pupils are making progress some groups are not. All groups are mixed ability, some with large class sizes. A review of class groupings might enable further progress strategies to be implemented.
- Pupils are developing skills appropriate to their age and ability although the pace of the acquisition requires improvement. The three year trend of results at key stage four and key stage five would indicate this is an area for development. The standards of attainment of groups are not in line with diocesan and national averages; some are below these benchmarks. It is evident that strategies currently being used are now having an impact on improving results. The gaps overall are beginning to close.

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

- During the inspection teaching was found to be good.
- Teachers have a confident level of specialist expertise which they are using well in planning to address underachievement issues. They are using a range of resources and strategies to enhance learning. ICT is being used effectively to engage and motivate pupils.
- Homework is regularly set with helpful feedback. Pupils are also given the opportunity to respond to feedback and correct work, therefore closing the gap in learning.
- Teachers systematically and effectively check pupils' understanding throughout lessons, identifying where they need to intervene. A good awareness of pupils' prior learning and capabilities informs planning to meet the needs of pupils. Regular marking and constructive feedback are a feature of learning strategies which enable pupils to respond with their feedback. This is supporting improving levels of progress for groups of pupils.

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

- Leaders and managers conduct a range of systematic monitoring activities relating to provision and outcomes in Religious Education. As a consequence, there is the capacity to plan effectively to address the current under performance.
- Due to good quality leadership the subject has a prominent profile in the school and makes a positive contribution to the moral and spiritual development of pupils and to their ability to make decisions about their own vocations. Significant improvements have been made to strengthen teaching and learning, this is evident in the appointment of good quality RE specialist teachers.
- The challenge of the unavoidable absence of permanent staff has been strongly addressed. School leadership has exercised careful monitoring of performance and outcomes of teaching and learning and, where necessary, taken appropriate action. A robust monitoring cycle enables ongoing improvements to be made.
- Religious Education is beginning to compare favourably with other core curriculum subjects in terms of staffing, capitation and curriculum time. An improved staffing ratio for RE has been implemented. Once results are equitable with other high performing subjects, Religious Education will be able to take its rightful place as a flagship department.
- School leadership is currently working towards meeting the requirements of the Bishop's Conference in every respect.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have very good sacramental preparation in accordance with diocesan policy. The school is well supported by local clergy.

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.

2

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**3**

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

3

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 Benet Biscop Catholic Academy
Unique reference number	141814
Local authority	Northumberland
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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