



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Stephen's Catholic Primary School, Longbenton

URN: 108621

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: 14-15 June

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	1
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.....	1
Collective worship (p.7) The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....	1
The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- The Catholic life and mission of the school are outstanding in every regard; the highest level of pastoral support is offered to all staff, pupils, their families and the wider community.
- The commitment of pupils to the school's vision and mission values, 'St. Stephen's Way', is a great strength; their behaviour is exemplary, and they are inspirational witnesses to the Gospel and to Catholic Social Teaching.
- Senior leaders have an inspiring vision of outstanding teaching and learning; they are highly ambitious for the school and are relentless in their drive for the very best outcomes possible.

What the school needs to improve:

- In the teaching and learning of religious education, continue to provide greater challenge so that increased progress is made for all groups of pupils, and especially the more able.
- Ensure that greater depth and skillful, effective questioning enables all pupils to extend their learning.
- Develop the capacity for pupils to routinely evaluate the quality of the prayer and liturgy they have planned, in order to increase their consideration of the impact prayer has on their lives.

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

A strong, welcoming, inclusive Catholic culture is evident at St Stephen's Catholic Primary School. The Mission and Vision Values lie at the heart of school and are known, lived, and experienced by all pupils, and endorsed by staff and parents. A sense of community is evident in the quality of relationships across the school. All school members fully embrace the vision, 'The Word of God, and the service and strength of St. Stephen, guides our steps and leads us in learning'. It is a clear, inspiring expression of the educational mission of the Church and of the school's particular charism. The 'St. Stephen's Way' promotes the mission of the school exceptionally well; all pupils can confidently explain what it means to them in their daily lives. As a result, pupils demonstrate deep respect for their own personal dignity and that of others. They know that they are loved and valued in all of their God-given uniqueness. Pupils feel valued and cared for because staff are deeply committed to treating everyone with dignity and respect. Pupils proudly explain how St. Stephen's school helps them to 'trust God as though he was a friend, because if you do, everything will be alright'. Pupils have a deeply embedded understanding of the example of Jesus, and confidently make connections between their actions and those of Christ. The school's Agents for Change group recognises the importance of social justice. They successfully lead and contribute significantly to acts of change including food bank collections, events to support the Turkey and Syria Earthquake appeal and raising awareness about emotions linked with children's mental health. Pupils across school talk passionately about their work towards the 'Live Simply Award' as well as the 'Friends Resilience Programme' which is embedded throughout the curriculum.

The powerful sense of community runs through the school. Staff are exemplary in their relationships and provide the highest levels of pastoral care and outstanding service to the

community. They make exceptional contributions to the school's Catholic life and mission and there is a strong sense of vocation and belonging amongst all staff. They embrace the Mission and Vision Values and are excellent role models for all. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and are very supportive of its work. One parent commented, 'St. Stephen's is an amazing school with an excellent school message of kindness and love of God which is shown to each other'. The provision for relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) are well met, and taught in line with statutory and diocesan requirements, firmly rooted in the teachings of the Church.

Leaders are highly ambitious for St. Stephen's and are dedicated to ensuring that pupils experience an enriching Catholic education that provides excellent formation. Senior leaders are exemplary role models, creating a highly supportive culture, where the well-being of staff and pupils is paramount, resulting in an ethos of mutual respect and growth. They are meticulous in ensuring staff receive high quality training so that the Catholic life and mission of the school is always consistently strong. Staff feedback highlights how they feel valued and supported by the school. Leaders are relentless in their drive for excellence and have clear action plans and strategies that continue to drive improvement. Governors are passionate about their role within the school, supporting and challenging leaders, and ensuring that all policies reflect the Catholic mission of the school. They rightly see the school as a source of inspiration to the whole community and are ambitious about its contribution to the lives of the people it serves, fully supporting St. Stephen's in its core mission.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

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

1

Provision

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

1

Leadership

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

1



Pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons at St. Stephen's. A clear and consistent approach to teaching and learning enables all pupils to improve their knowledge and understanding of religious education steadily. Pupils talk confidently about their learning, using religious vocabulary accurately. They talk eloquently about their learning of other faiths. All pupils across the school demonstrate excellent learning behaviours and high levels of concentration. They experience well planned opportunities for independent learning. Peer discussion is used effectively. From variable starting points most pupils make good progress in each key stage, with no significant variation between groups of learners. Pupils skilfully revisit prior learning, demonstrating their ability to know more and remember more during their lessons, thus achieving the best possible outcomes. Attainment in religious education is strong, with most pupils meeting age-related expectations by the end of key stage two. The coverage and progress evident in pupils' books endorse the findings of monitoring and analysis undertaken across the school.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge because of the high-quality professional development provided. Staff have opportunities to engage in professional development in religious education each term, which ensures there is a thorough understanding in planning and supporting pupils to reflect meaningfully on each lesson's learning objectives. Some staff members are actively engaged in study for the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS) which further supports deeper thinking and teaching in religious education. The use of 'challenge questions' is becoming well-embedded in the school and a testament to the relentless pursuit by the staff to enable pupils to have a deeper understanding of, and personal response to, the curriculum. Lessons are structured to elicit pupils' responses

through skilful questioning, maximising the learning of all pupils. There is a culture of staff working together with dedicated support from senior leaders to ensure teaching is never less than good. Other adults in the classroom are highly effective in ensuring all pupils access learning. All staff adhere to the school's marking and feedback policy, recognising and valuing pupils' efforts. Teachers encourage and support pupils to do their best and understand how to further improve. Teachers understand the centrality of religious education in the spiritual and moral development of pupils, and this results in the high status they give to the subject.

Leaders and governors maintain religious education at the heart of the curriculum. They ensure that the curriculum fully meets the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory 2012* and that the required amount of time is provided. Leaders at all levels ensure the religious education curriculum is carefully adapted to meet the needs of all pupils in St. Stephen's and that it has full parity with other core curriculum subjects. The intent and implementation of the religious education curriculum have been carefully considered, and learning is effectively sequenced to meet the needs of all pupils. As a result, prior learning is effectively enhanced and built upon. A detailed tracking system for monitoring religious education is securely in place with regular lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and data analysis. The school's religious education subject leader is an expert in the subject and has an inspiring vision to further improve teaching and learning, as well as providing high quality support to all staff. The head teacher and subject leader provide quality resources, and ensure that staff receive regular, pertinent training and updates. They have an accurate understanding of strengths and areas for development in religious education and take effective action to secure improvements. Together, they are passionate educators who strive for excellence in every aspect of school life and for the very best outcomes for all pupils.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

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

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

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

1

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life at St. Stephen's and pupils value the many opportunities they have to engage in worship and reflection. They have a secure knowledge of traditional prayers, and they pray with confidence and reverence. Pupils recognise prayer as an essential part of school life and display very positive attitudes towards all aspects of prayer. They particularly enjoy 'guided meditation' which allows an opportunity for the presence of God to enter into their lives. Reverence and respect permeate all prayer and liturgies; pupils are inspired to respond with sincerity. Pupils have a detailed understanding of the liturgical year and make good connections to the cycle of prayer and liturgy. Pupils are confident in preparing and leading prayers, liturgies and reflections. They fully understand their role when leading liturgical prayers and undertake these confidently and with skill. The 'Statement to Live By' liturgies, which are independently planned and delivered by pupils during the Pastoral Care sessions, are of high quality. The sense of respectfulness and prayerful silences during worship is poignant. Prayer spaces in classrooms and the wider school are cared for and treated with the greatest of respect by pupils and staff. Many pupils regularly take the opportunity to partake or take a lead in the voluntary lunchtime rosary club in the school's prayer garden. Pupils are beginning to develop their skills when evaluating acts of worship, identifying how they can make further improvements. Prayer is an integral part of all school life at St. Stephen's, with the importance of prayer being understood by all pupils. They understand that prayer is their opportunity to talk to God and this can happen at any time and anywhere.

The rhythm of the school day is built around regular prayer which is valued and respected by all. The rich provision for the school's prayer life makes a significant contribution to the

spiritual life of the whole school community. Many high-quality areas in and around the school, such as the newly created prayer garden, continue to inspire and support the development of spontaneous prayer. All staff are totally committed and highly skilled in providing a spiritual and inspiring model of prayer and liturgy which allows pupils time for reflection, leading to a commitment to 'go forth' and act differently. Parents are regularly invited to school to join their children in prayer, and they are extremely positive about St. Stephen's work in nurturing faith. One parent commented, 'I am really thankful to be able to take part in the many liturgies organised by the school as they are always so meaningful'.

School leaders place a high priority on securing high-quality liturgical prayer and worship throughout the school to create an atmosphere of serenity, peace and inner calm. They ensure that prayer and worship are relevant, have a clear purpose and message, and relate to the lived experience of the school community. An in-depth and thorough knowledge and understanding of the liturgical year is demonstrated by all leaders, thus ensuring that the school marks all significant events in the Church's cycle of seasons and feasts. Leaders ensure that all staff receive high-quality and effective training to deliver prayer and liturgy, which results in good levels of confidence and competence amongst staff. Senior leaders monitor the school's provision of prayer in line with their monitoring and review cycle, which leads to well-planned improvements. Governors know the school exceptionally well and are active in their commitment to the prayer life of St. Stephen's. They frequently attend prayer and liturgies in school, thus enabling them to witness the high quality of provision.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Stephen's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	108621
Full postal address of the school	Goathland Avenue, Longbenton, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE12 8FA
School phone number	0191 643 2910
Name of head teacher or principal	Stephen Fallon
Chair of governing board	Vivien Cunningham
School Website	https://www.ststephensprimaryschool.co.uk/
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Trustees	Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Elaine White	Lead inspector
Mary Cunningham	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