

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

School: St Columba's Catholic Primary School

Address: Church Lane
Walney
Barrow-in-Furness
Cumbria
LA14 3AD

Telephone Number: 01229 471522

Email address: head@stcolumbas.cumbria.sch.uk

School URN: 112364

Headteacher: Miss C M McDonald

Chair of Governors: Mr S Donnan

Section 48 Inspector: Mrs J Hampson

Date of Inspection: 27th November 2012

The inspection report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Michael Campbell O.S.A., the Bishop of Lancaster (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 Columba's Catholic Primary school is a smaller than average size Voluntary Aided school in the Diocese of Lancaster. The school serves the parish of St Columba with St Patrick, Barrow. The great majority of pupils are of white British heritage. There are currently 207 pupils on roll of whom approximately 97 are baptised Catholics. There are no children from other faith backgrounds.

On leaving St Columba's the majority of pupils transfer to St Bernard's Catholic High School in Barrow.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Pupil Catchment:

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| Number of pupils on roll: | 207 |
| Planned Admission Number of Pupils: | 30 |
| Percentage of pupils baptised Catholics: | 47% |
| Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: | 40% |
| Percentage of pupils from other faith backgrounds: | 0% |
| Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: | 13% |
| Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: | 10% |
| Percentage of pupils with special needs: | 19% |

Staffing

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| Full-time teachers: | 6 |
| Part-time teachers: | 5 |
| Percentage of Catholic teachers: | 92% |
| Percentage of teachers with CCRS: | 77% |

Percentage of learning time given to RE:

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| R | 10% | Yr 4 | 10% |
| Yr 1 | 10% | Yr 5 | 10% |
| Yr 2 | 10% | Yr 6 | 10% |
| Yr 3 | 10% | | |

Parishes served by the school:

1. St Columba's with St Patrick's

Overall Effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

MAIN FINDINGS

St Columba's is an outstanding Catholic school, where the dedication and drive of all staff and governors leads to high standards, continuous improvement and excellent provision for all pupils. There is excellent leadership at all levels, ensuring a shared vision, which promotes the fullness of life in Christ for all members of the school community. Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning, enjoy coming to school and are very proud of it. Outcomes for pupils are outstanding, with no significant variation between any major groups. All pupils make excellent progress from low starting points and attainment is high. Pupils benefit greatly from the opportunity to contribute to many aspects of the Catholic life of the school through the 'Children's Improvement Team: Catholic Ethos Group'. Their participation in, and leadership of, the prayer and liturgical life of the school is excellent.

The school provides an excellent Catholic education. Teaching is consistently highly effective in enthusing pupils and ensuring that they learn extremely well. Teachers focus their planning on meeting the needs of all pupils and on raising standards. All aspects of assessment, including monitoring and tracking systems, have a positive impact on pupil progress.

The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding and is at the heart of the success of the school as a vibrant Catholic community. All staff are excellent role models for pupils and offer a variety of prayer and worship opportunities in class and beyond the school day. The promotion of pupils' spiritual and moral development is exceptional. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school.

The headteacher provides strong leadership and, with the support of her able deputy, ensures that all pupils are exceptionally well cared for, supported in their faith journey and 'have life to the full.'

The School's capacity for sustained improvement

The school has successfully addressed all priorities for improvement from the last inspection. The dedication and drive of the headteacher, senior leaders and governors, ensure continuous improvement in every aspect of school life. They successfully ensure the commitment of all staff to the

ethos and mission of Catholic education. The school's capacity for sustained improvement in all areas is outstanding because of regular, rigorous and accurate self-evaluation leading to clear, challenging targets and appropriate priorities.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Continue to develop the successful skills-based approach to curriculum Religious Education (RE) in order to plan for learning opportunities, which extend beyond the school and thus have a significant impact on pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- Embed assessment for learning and the use of the pupil targets to continue to achieve high standards in RE.

PUPILS

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

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Inspection confirms the school's self-evaluation that outcomes for pupils in RE are outstanding.

Pupils enjoy RE and have extremely positive attitudes towards their learning. One year six pupil spoke of RE lessons giving her time to 'think about life and how many questions there are that we can't possibly answer.'

Pupils, in particular those in upper Key Stage 2, actively seek to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills in RE. They are enthusiastic learners who engage well in lessons and their achievement is very good.

Monitoring of pupil progress in RE has a high priority in the school's monitoring and evaluation schedule. Assessment data, pupil-tracking systems, analysis of progress towards individual pupil targets and regular work scrutiny provide evidence of pupils' continuous improvement.

Standards of attainment in RE show an improving trend and for the last three years have been high at the end of Key Stage 2. Current data shows this trend will continue. From low starting points on entry to school, all pupils including boys and girls, Catholics and those other than Catholic and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make very good progress throughout all three key stages. Procedures for assessing attainment on entry enable Foundation Stage staff to match the curriculum closely to the needs of all pupils and ensure very good progress.

Most pupils attain high standards in knowledge and understanding of religion (AT1) and in an ability to reflect on meaning (AT2) in all key stages. Standards of attainment are high in all strands of each attainment target. At the end of Key Stage 2, all pupils attain level 4, with over one third attaining level 5.

Regular assessment ensures that teachers identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities accurately. Support staff contribute well to learning for these pupils, resulting in very good progress.

Through the 'Children's Improvement Team: Catholic Ethos Group', pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of school. For example, they take responsibility for prayer sessions, liturgies (both in school and in church) and fundraising activities for people in need including a community in Monze, Zambia. They speak confidently of their role in school to 'let everyone know that God is always with us, supporting us, watching over us, even when we feel most alone.'

The excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in school enables all pupils to express their views and beliefs with confidence. They are skilled in referring to the teachings of Jesus and other key religious figures and making links to their own lives. They recognise that the knowledge and skills they gain in RE help to prepare them for life beyond St Columba's school.

Prayer is truly at the heart of the school community. Vibrant acts of worship, which are fully inclusive, engage all pupils' interest. Pupils throughout the school regularly prepare and lead acts of Collective Worship. They do this with confidence and enthusiasm because they are extremely well-supported by staff. For example, pupils take turns to prepare and lead the Tuesday prayer group, which runs before the school day begins. They are at ease and act with integrity when leading this prayer group for staff and pupils. Pupils in Reception are welcomed into the school and matched to a 'prayer partner' from year four. These children pray together in their pairs and staff guide them in meditation on the Word. Pupils respond positively to whole school acts of worship, praying reverently and remaining quiet during the time for reflection.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School

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The school's self-evaluation is that leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding and inspection confirms this.

Leaders and managers are very good at promoting Catholic values and principles. The headteacher's passion for this special Catholic community inspires all those who work in school.

The Catholic mission of the school is at the heart of all school life. This is because the mission statement, which aims for every child to experience a full life in Christ, is the starting point for all school policies, lessons and acts of worship. It also underpins every personal interaction in school. The impact of this was witnessed during the inspection, when a group of year six pupils spoke of 'holding Christ close to everything we do in school.'

Monitoring and evaluation procedures of RE are outstanding. The RE subject leader, who is the headteacher, provides excellent support for staff in the delivery, resourcing and assessment of curriculum RE. Through her leadership and support, staff set challenging targets for pupils in R.E. and use these targets as the starting point for their lesson objectives. They guide pupils well, marking clearly and effectively to take pupils to the next step of learning. Leaders have successfully ensured that very effective monitoring, assessment and tracking systems are in place and are having a positive impact on pupils' learning, progress and standards. They accurately inform areas of both strength and development and contribute to the school's excellent capacity for improvement.

Governors provide high levels of professional challenge and support. They are very proactive, involved in the Catholic life of the school and make a highly significant contribution to the school's work. The parish priest, who is also a governor, is a regular visitor in school, supporting staff in the delivery of RE and reporting to governors on issues relating to RE and to the Catholic life of the school. Governors are committed to making high quality staff development available to staff: this supports and develops RE and the Catholic life of the school. This policy is having an extremely positive impact on the quality of teaching of RE. Almost 80% of teachers hold, or are currently working towards, the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS). The school engages well with the Diocesan Education Service to support assessment and moderation in RE, as well to keep up to date with new initiatives in the subject. Governors discharge their statutory and canonical duties well.

The headteacher, staff and governors, including the parish priest, work tirelessly to ensure that the school participates fully and actively in developing a variety of partnership activities. These include charity work, collaboration with other Catholic schools, other local schools and the school has excellent parish links. Wherever possible, liturgies take place in church, so that parishioners can participate. This has a significant impact on pupils' achievement and well-being and on the Catholic life of the school.

The promotion of community cohesion by the school is outstanding. The headteacher and deputy headteacher successfully ensure there is a

common sense of belonging amongst staff, governors and pupils and all have an extremely high regard for the Catholic life of the school. The headteacher has been instrumental in much of the work done by the cluster schools in response to *Fit for Mission? Schools*. Every aspect of school life demonstrates that leaders respect difference, value diversity and ensure equal opportunities for all.

The inclusion of all is a priority for the senior leaders in school. The inclusion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is outstanding, both in curriculum RE and in Collective Worship. For example, all children and staff sign hymns.

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

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School monitoring systems show that teaching is outstanding overall and inspection confirms this judgement. A good range of teaching styles, excellent questioning techniques, clear explanations and well-paced lessons ensure that all pupils are consistently enthusiastic about their learning and make good progress in both attainment targets (ATs). In a lesson observed in Key Stage 2, the teacher developed pupils' religious vocabulary and guided them to use it in their answers. A culture of 'thinking about linking' means that pupils are confident in showing an understanding of religious sources and beliefs and making links between them. For example, pupils in Key Stage 2 confidently use scripture as a source of evidence to explain the beliefs and actions of some Christian people.

Planning ensures that lessons build on prior learning and meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers start with the pupil targets and plan creative ways to enable children to work towards these targets. The school deploys support staff very effectively to assist pupils with additional needs and they make a significant contribution to the learning and progress of these pupils.

Teachers and teaching assistants demonstrate true commitment to fulfilling the mission statement in all their actions and in every school activity, so that every child can live life to the full.

Assessment and monitoring procedures are excellent and give a clear, accurate and up-to-date picture of pupil progress and attainment. Leaders and teachers use this information consistently and systematically to sustain high levels of achievement. The tracking system for RE enables the school to focus on ensuring that different groups of pupils achieve equally well and teachers use this information effectively to set targets for improvement. Marking is excellent and, alongside the individual pupil

targets, ensures that pupils know how well they have done as well as what they need to do to improve further.

The RE curriculum is adapted well to meet the specific needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This skill-based approach to teaching enriches RE, which extends beyond the school day and involves every child, through the extra-curricular art club and the many activities in the community. Planning is excellent and ensures full coverage of the religious education curriculum. The RE curriculum provides excellent opportunities for, and impacts positively on, pupils' spiritual and moral development. The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference with respect to the time allotted to RE.

At the heart of the school is the prayer life. The art club carefully displays pupils' work; this ensures that the gospel message is visible around the whole school. Throughout the school day, there are many opportunities for pupils, staff and governors to pray. For example, the deputy headteacher leads a prayer session for staff before the school day. He guides staff in meditation on the Word, inspiring them to keep Christ at the centre of their work in the day ahead. Staff and pupils attend the Tuesday prayer group, at which pupils take the lead. The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding and it makes a significant contribution to the spiritual needs of pupils. It is fully inclusive, reflective and well-planned enabling pupils to take an active part. Pupils' liturgical formation is well-planned, appropriate to their faith backgrounds and shows progression.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

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

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| Overall effectiveness | 1 |
| The school's capacity for sustained improvement | 1 |
| PUPILS How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups | 1 |
| • how well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education? | 1 |
| ❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 1 |
| ❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 1 |
| ❖ pupils' attainment in Religious Education | 1 |
| • to what extent do pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school? | 1 |
| • how well do pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship? | 1 |
| LEADERS AND MANAGERS How effective are leaders and managers in developing 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 and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils? | 1 |
| • how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for RE and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils? | 1 |
| • 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? | 1 |
| • how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well-being? | 1 |
| • how effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion? | 1 |
| PROVISION How effective is the provision for Catholic Education? | 1 |
| • the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in? | 1 |
| • the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education? | 1 |
| • the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs? | 1 |
| • the quality of Collective Worship provided by the school? | 1 |