



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for
**St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School,
Seaham**

URN: 149165

Carried out on behalf of the Rt Rev Stephen Wright, Bishop of the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle on:

Date: 12-13 October 2023

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

- Pupil behaviour is outstanding. This is a result of the high quality relationships throughout school and the true sense of nurture and belonging.
- Leadership, at all levels, is visionary and as a result there is complete engagement from all members of the school family.
- The range and quality of personal development opportunities are inspirational.
- Religious literacy and high levels of oracy are evident in lessons and throughout discussions with pupils.

- Scripture has a high priority and is central to the discrete religious education teaching and learning but also within the holistic curriculum that permeates all elements of school life.

What the school needs to improve:

- Adapt religious education tasks to enable all pupils to reach their full potential, and in particular the greater depth pupils, ensuring that they maximise their learning and further deepen their understanding.
- Ensure that the richness of creative and spiritual leadership opportunities offered to pupils is developed further through strategic, targeted support and sharing the expertise of experienced staff.

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



St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School is a vibrant and living example of the mission of the Church. Pupils fully understand and embrace the core message of the school mission statement; they are 'centred in Christ'. They demonstrate a clear sense of ownership of the mission statement, from a Year 1 pupil who stated 'Everything that we do is centred in Christ. Kindness is another word for centred in Christ', to a Year 6 pupil who stated 'We all want to follow the example of Jesus. We are all one family and families don't hurt each other'. There is a wealth of opportunities for pupils to step up to leadership and this is embraced by the pupils. Their deep care and understanding that they are known and loved by God makes them proud, authentic and skilled at carrying out these roles. Pupil behaviour is a huge strength of the school in all elements of school life. There is a true sense of mutual respect and pupils flourish in this environment.

Christ is truly at the centre, and heart, of this thriving Catholic primary school. The mission statement, along with a strong sense of Catholic social teaching and British Values, are vibrantly celebrated and lived, and are strongly interwoven throughout the whole community. Rich and varied opportunities are provided which embrace the mission of the Church. These enrich the community of St Mary Magdalen's and are reflected in the positive relationships and supportive ethos which is palpable throughout the community. The school environment effectively witnesses its Catholic character through a wealth of carefully chosen religious images and artefacts and through pupil displays. The outdoor prayer space enhances the opportunity for pupils to pray with staff but also for individual quiet reflection. The relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) lead has a clear understanding of the policy

and practice in the RSHE curriculum. The teaching and learning fully reflect diocesan requirements and are firmly rooted in the teachings of the Church.

The local governing committee and whole school staff, supported by a knowledgeable and skillful senior leadership team and a truly inspirational headteacher, clearly articulate the Church's mission in education through their words and actions. Staff speak of the strength of leadership and the hardworking ethos which permeates the whole team. High levels of care and mutual respect are evident throughout the community. Leaders place a high priority on personal development, as well as on professional development. As a result, staff speak of belonging to a school family where they are valued and appreciated. There are a variety of explicit examples which support and promote staff wellbeing, and this is an area that leaders continue to develop. There is a clear acknowledgement that parents are the first educators of their children, and this partnership is celebrated and embraced through various engagement strategies. There was a significant volume of response from parents to the survey, highlighting the collaborative and supportive relationship. One response referred to St Mary Magdalen's as 'a school to be proud of. Children are treated as inquisitive individuals and are empowered to engage fully with their local community, wider community and global community as active citizens.' There is a flourishing partnership between the school and the local parish which is firmly rooted in Catholic social teaching and the pursuit of the common good. Leaders are very aware of the human dignity of others and the genuine sense of care and nurture is a real strength.

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



Behaviour for learning within lessons is outstanding. This results in good levels of attainment and progress across the whole school which exemplifies the learning required by the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory 2012*. From variable starting points pupils make consistently good progress, with no significant variation between groups of learners. Pupils are actively engaged and speak confidently about their learning and enjoyment in religious education; they talk about staff making learning fun. Religious literacy, particularly for the older pupils, is a real strength of the school. Older pupils are knowledgeable and articulate in their use of religious vocabulary and in their understanding of scripture. They are able to speak fluently about how this relates to modern day life. They can make some effective links in their learning and achieve a high standard of work. Pupils throughout school are able to work independently and can think for themselves. Their high quality work is well presented, showing some signs of individuality and creativity. The coverage and progress evident in pupils' books endorse the findings of monitoring undertaken across the school. Pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are doing in religious education lessons; they are able to use the teacher feedback to help them try to think more deeply. The school continues to work on effective use of adaptation of tasks to enable all pupils, particularly those working at greater depth, to reach their full potential.

All staff demonstrate consistently high levels of subject knowledge. This authentic subject knowledge allows for quality teaching and high expectations within lessons. Lessons are effectively and sequentially planned to enable pupils to make consistently good progress, to achieve high standards, and to present their learning in clear and accessible ways. The use of 'The Big Question', used at the start of a topic and revisited at the end of a topic to demonstrate

depth of learning, is becoming well embedded throughout school. The mastery approach, along with the variety and creativity within lessons, ensures that pupils achieve good outcomes and make good progress. Staff skillfully build on prior learning, ensuring pupils know and remember more, through the use of 'memory joggers' at the start of each lesson. This allows pupils to revisit knowledge from the previous topic and lessons within the current topic and to make links in their learning. Teachers use questioning well to monitor understanding, clarify knowledge, and move learning forward. Teachers adhere to the school's marking policy, recognising and valuing pupils' efforts, encouraging and supporting pupils to do their best and to understand how to improve.

Leaders maintain religious education at the heart of the curriculum. Religious education is given full parity with the other core subjects and is led with the same diligence and attention to detail. Leaders and governors demonstrate a high level of rigour in their analysis, resulting in focused, strategic action which leads to high outcomes. The religious education lead has a thorough understanding of what constitutes outstanding teaching and learning. She has a detailed and comprehensive knowledge of religious education across the whole school and a clear vision, supported by the head teacher, senior leadership team, and governors, of how to further enhance the subject. Leaders use a variety of approaches to monitor the effectiveness of the school's work and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. They have a clear vision for teaching and learning and a good understanding of how and what effective action is required to secure improvements. All findings of monitoring are reported to the local governing committee on a regular basis.

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

The quality of prayer and liturgy provided across the school is inspirational. Pupils speak confidently and articulately about different ways of praying; this was evidenced throughout the vibrant prayer life of St Mary Magdalen's community. Pupils engage deeply in prayer experiences and see prayer as a central and important part of their lives. They talk confidently about the power of prayer and how they pray for people who are sick or less fortunate than themselves, both in their school community and in the wider world. A Year 6 pupil spoke about 'God hearing their voices when they pray together'. Personal development opportunities, such as the pupil prayer leaders from Early Years to Year 6, are welcomed by the pupils. They undertake these roles with confidence, because of the highly effective provision and modelling from staff. There is a clear and inspiring structure to pupil leadership. Year 6 pupils skillfully plan their own liturgical prayers, with no adult support. They have a thorough understanding of the liturgical structure, whilst showing a deep understanding of the importance of the theme, linked to scripture. Staff expertly lead the younger prayer leaders through the planning and preparation for their class prayer time, reinforcing the key elements and providing the children with options and choices linked to the key theme. Pupils talk about their headteacher helping them to understand the Gospel messages, with one pupil saying, 'Our head teacher gives us a deeper understanding of what Jesus is asking us to do'.

Carefully chosen scripture forms a central element of the prayer opportunities of this community. Prayer and liturgy are central to life at St Mary Magdalen's from the daily pattern of prayer to the weekly structure of prayerful gatherings. These are enhanced by prayer and liturgy linked to the liturgical calendar, and also times of spontaneous prayer in response to moments of joy and sorrow for the school community or to national and world events. St Mary

Magdalen's offers rich and high quality prayer experiences incorporating a combination of traditional prayer and more creative times of prayer. Staff pray together and all staff are invited to pray as part of staff gatherings. This is modelled to allow all staff to feel confident to participate. There is a flourishing partnership with parents who feel very much part of the school's prayer life. One parent commented, 'We absolutely love that we can come and witness a class liturgical prayer, it's beautiful to see the children all engaged and amazing for us to come and see them in the school environment.'

Leaders have a secure understanding of high quality prayer and liturgy ensuring that prayer and worship are relevant and have a clear purpose and message. The head teacher and senior leadership team, with the support of a very proactive parish priest and local governing committee, prioritise prayer and liturgy and have successfully created a rich diet of creative, well-constructed prayer opportunities for the whole school community. Leaders have a clear strategy for pupil planning and participation to develop pupil leadership skills. This allows pupils to sequentially develop the confidence and understanding needed to flourish and grow from the opportunities provided. The views of all stakeholders have been considered and help to formulate a deep understanding of the centrality of prayer in the life of the school. The school actively seeks the views of parents following community events and this feeds directly into future plans. There are strong parish links, and the parish priest is a frequent and welcome visitor to school. His awareness and passion for the work of the school is clear.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	149165
Full postal address of the school	Dene House Road, Seaham, County Durham, SR7 7BJ
School phone number	0191 581 3055
Name of head teacher or principal	Andrea Goodwin
Chair of governing board	Kathryn Robinson
School Website	https://www.st-marymagdalens.durham.sch.uk/
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Trustees	Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	January 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Leigh-anne Young

Lead inspector

David Miller

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