



# St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School

## Crook

URN: 149057

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle

02–03 May 2024

### Summary of key findings

#### 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

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Partially

### What the school does well

- A welcoming ethos pervades St Cuthbert's, and the mission statement is at the core of school life. As a result, all members of the school community feel valued.
- The relationships between staff, pupils, families, the parish, and the wider community are exemplary. Consequently, the school has a deep understanding of the social and emotional needs of all pupils, especially the most vulnerable, and gives these the highest priority.
- The school environment proclaims the Catholic identity of the school and pupils are rightly proud of their school.
- Religious education lessons include varied experiences to support pupil engagement.
- Creative prayer styles allow pupils to develop their spirituality in a range of ways.

## What the school needs to improve

- Develop a robust process to monitor and evaluate the impact of religious education to inform improvement planning and to ensure that all pupils, including those in mixed-age classes, have equitable and ambitious provision.
- Ensure religious education lessons allow pupils to express and consider points of view, (including those of people of other faiths, using deepening knowledge of scripture and other sources, and varied, appropriately ambitious, vocabulary.
- Monitor and evaluate the provision for prayer and liturgy to ensure that all pupils lead, evaluate and participate in high quality collective worship.

## 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

**Pupil outcomes**

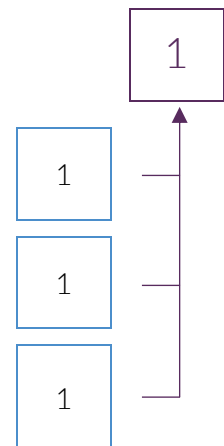
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

**Provision**

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

**Leadership**

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School is a vibrant example of the mission of the Church. The school's mission statement, 'live the light, share the light, be the light,' permeates school life and as a result, it is a place where joy pervades. Parents report that their children speak about 'being the light' at home. The school's special charism of welcome is lived out by every member of the school family. Pupils are rightly proud to belong to St Cuthbert's. They know that they are authentically loved, respected, and listened to by staff. As one parent said, 'The children are not just numbers, the teachers know each child.' Pupils know that forgiveness is important when they have disagreements. They are always willing to move on, following restorative conversations. In class, they are patient, kind and share willingly. They respect each other and their environment and recognise that their actions impact upon others. Pupils take great pride in contributing to the school, parish, town, and global community. They generously support charities, including Cafod, Crook Foodbank and Fairtrade, and pupils are given opportunities to consider others through Faith in Action, Pupil Parliament, and the Mini Vinnies group. As a consequence, they flourish.

Staff work well together to provide high levels of pastoral care. Consequently, pupils feel safe and are loved. The staff's commitment to nurturing all pupils, most notably the vulnerable and their families, is exemplary. Parents recognise this as a strength of the school, with one parent commenting, 'I love this school. No one judges me or my family. The teachers just do their best to help us.' Staff have created an environment which effectively witnesses the school's Catholic identity through imaginative displays, religious artefacts, scripture stones and gospel images. Each classroom has a dedicated focal point reflecting the liturgical year and pupils reverently

interact with the artefacts placed there. The outdoor prayer garden and indoor prayer room enhance the opportunities for pupils to pray together. Staff have introduced Catholic social teaching and by Year 6, pupils are able to reflect upon our common home. The International Schools work provides opportunities for pupils to explore other cultures and as a result, pupils can reflect upon their place in the world. The school's provision for relationships, sex and health education meets statutory and diocesan requirements and reinforces the school's commitment to the education of the whole person.

Leaders live out their vision to serve those in their care with passion. They prioritise the wellbeing of staff, developing policies that address workload and welfare. They are highly successful in their engagement with parents and their commitment extends beyond the school boundary. It is a testimony to their dedication to the vulnerable that several pupils have been able to flourish at St Cuthbert's when parents reported that they had not been able to do so in other settings. Leaders invest time in knowing everyone, and consequently they sustain a culture of care. The chair of governors and the parish priest are regular visitors to school and support the senior leadership team in their mission. They maintain a strong link to the parish family and the diocese and, as a result, the Catholic life and mission remain central to school life. The local governing committee invests in the professional development of staff, so they have an embedded understanding of the school's mission, which pervades all aspects of school life. Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust (BHCET) support leaders to monitor and evaluate the Catholic life of the school and so leaders are well-placed to prioritise improvements.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

**Pupil outcomes**

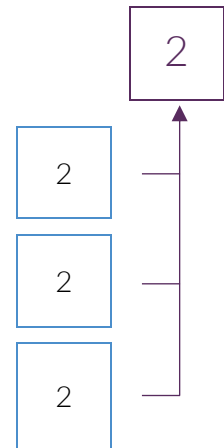
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

**Provision**

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

**Leadership**

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



Pupils enjoy religious education lessons and take pride in their learning. They sustain engagement and, in almost all classes, complete tasks with enthusiasm. From their starting points, most pupils make secure progress, and, in many lessons, tasks are carefully adapted to ensure pupils keep up with the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to know and remember more, although this is inconsistent. By the time they leave the school, pupils can work with independence and recognise the demands of religious commitment. Key vocabulary to support religious literacy is identified, although this is not systematically introduced across the school and therefore not all pupils can clearly articulate and justify their point of view. Pupils can think theologically and can relate their learning to their actions. One pupil commented, 'We link our lessons to how we behave. We can always change. If we listen, we know that we can learn from Jesus and we can change so that we are like Him.' Pupils are given feedback in lessons which supports their learning, but pupils are not always able to demonstrate their understanding of the learning intention as the tasks do not always allow for this.

Teachers demonstrate a commitment to religious education and the impact this has on the academic and spiritual development of pupils. Overall, they have appropriate subject knowledge and plan varied lessons. The learning in some lessons, however, is limited due to irregularity in the sequencing of learning and because the specific learning intention is not always clear. Teachers plan lessons which comply with the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. However, because there are inconsistencies in the rigour of the delivery of some topics, there are some gaps in learning, including opportunities to show understanding of the links between beliefs and sources, beliefs and worship, and learning about other faiths. Teachers do not always plan opportunities for pupils to navigate bibles and explore scripture and therefore pupils' subject knowledge of scripture is sometimes limited. Tasks are varied so pupils can respond in different

ways. However, because they lack clarity, they do not always allow teachers to assess the pupils' responses to the learning intention. Feedback does not always fully comply with the school policy, so there are missed opportunities to assess accurately and move learning on. Teachers adapt explanations to secure learning and support pupils to undertake tasks. Teaching assistants are deployed to support the specific needs of some pupils, so that all pupils can make progress.

Leaders ensure that sufficient curriculum time is dedicated to religious education so that outcomes for pupils have parity with other curriculum subjects. They recognise the centrality of religious education and have begun to embed Catholic social teaching as a feature of the curriculum. They ensure that lessons are enriched with visitors and visits to church and the community. The delivery of the religious education curriculum has recently been adapted considering mixed-age classes and leaders have identified areas for further development. Leaders, including governors, have ensured that lessons are well resourced and staffed appropriately. Leaders prioritise diocesan and trust training to secure staff knowledge. However, the evaluation of provision has not been undertaken with rigour and so the quality of provision is inconsistent across the school. Monitoring has identified that pupils are not consistently challenged to develop higher order skills. It has also been identified that there are inconsistencies in expectations and in the application of policies. With support from BHCET, leaders have established an action plan to address these areas.

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### 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

2

Prayer experiences are part of the patterns of the day at St Cuthbert's. A mixture of traditional and personal prayer opportunities in school and in church ensure that pupils can celebrate their faith and life experiences. Pupils are shown different ways to pray, including through sign and dance, and consequently they are able to explore their own preferred ways of praying. Pupils fully understand the structure of celebrations of the word and show confidence in describing the elements of this form of prayer. One pupil spoke about the significance of 'going forth' and described how another pupil was, 'so good at living out the mission of our celebrations. We look up to her. She is like Jesus.' Some pupils can plan and lead celebrations at an appropriate level for their age, but do not routinely evaluate the experience. They are aware of traditional prayers and responses, although some pupils lack reverential engagement during whole school worship.

Staff support pupils to use their gifts to plan and lead celebrations of the word for their class and the whole school, and these reflect the liturgical seasons. However, this is inconsistent across the school year, with some pupils not having the opportunity to plan worship on a regular basis. Teachers model good practice during worship, both when leading and participating, with a teacher playing reflective guitar music to create a peaceful mood. Staff share their passion for worship with pupils and they ensure that music and dance are included in prayer experiences so that the differing spiritual needs of pupils are reflected in the prayer life of the school. The school environment provides varied opportunities for pupils to pray spontaneously. Pupils are rightly proud of these spaces, and eagerly describe how they are used. Because classrooms have dedicated prayer spaces, pupils are encouraged to spend time in reflection. Staff ensure that the prayer room and prayer garden are welcoming. Pupils value this opportunity, with one commenting, 'It is good to go into the quiet space with your peer mentor; it stops you scrumpling

up bad things inside.' There are also prayer spaces created through the year by staff that reflect the liturgical time. Parents highly value the opportunity to join their child in prayer, and, for some, this has been a catalyst to return to worship with the parish community.

St Cuthbert's Collective Worship policy reflects the Catholic character of the school and leaders act as good role models in leading worship. The headteacher reflects the importance of worship by joining pupils in prayer in classrooms. Leaders have ensured that the environment gives the whole school community the opportunity to pray, including prayer boxes for every class. Leaders prioritise providing varied opportunities for families to join their children in prayer, including sending home prayer bags at Easter and during Advent. Leaders invest in staff development to ensure they are well-placed to support pupils to plan and lead celebrations of the word. However, monitoring procedures have not identified that the engagement and involvement of all pupils is inconsistent, and therefore opportunities to ensure that every pupil has the time to develop their relationship with God are missed. BHCET have supported leaders in a recent review of the school improvement cycle and therefore appropriate actions have been identified to support full, consistent, and reverent participation. Leaders work in close partnership with the parish priest and wider parish community to ensure pupils experience a rich Catholic prayer life, including regular reception of the sacraments.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	149057
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8403421
Full postal address of the school	St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School, Church Hill, Crook, DL15 9DN
School phone number	01388762889
Headteacher	Michelle McElhone
Chair of Local Governing Body	Anne Timothy
School Website	<a href="http://www.stcuthbertscrook.org.uk">http://www.stcuthbertscrook.org.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	February 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

## The inspection team

Barbara Reilly-O'Donnell  
Paul Craig

Lead  
Team

## 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