

DIOCESE OF HALLAM SCHOOLS'  
DEPARTMENT



**SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT**

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL  
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

**ST HELEN'S CATHOLIC  
PRIMARY SCHOOL  
BARNSELY**

School URN	106640
Name of Chairman of Governors	Mr.E.Goddard.
Name of Headteacher	Mr.S.P.Harrison
Date of Inspection	1 December 2008
Section 48 Inspector	Mrs J. M. Bolton

"... an enthusiasm for the things of God."

## Introduction

The Inspection of St Helen's Catholic Primary School has been carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Diocese of Hallam Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections as approved by the Bishop of Hallam.

The process of inspection in the Diocese of Hallam has been developed as an activity of the Church to support schools in further deepening the quality of Catholic education provided.

## Description of School

St Helen's has 131 pupils on roll between the ages of 4 and 11. There will be a new intake of Foundation 2 children in January 2009. The school is situated next to the parish church of Sacred Heart and St Helen's Hoyland, Barnsley in the Dearne Valley. The school serves an area of social and economic disadvantage. The school is part of a Federation of three Catholic schools. Pupils come largely from the parish and local community. They are taught in mixed age classes. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, from an ethnic minority background, who speak English as an additional language or with learning and/or disabilities, are below average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is average. The vast majority of pupils are of Christian denomination. Attainment on entry is below national expectations.

## Information about the school

<b>Type of School</b>	<b>Primary</b>
<b>Age profile of Students</b>	<b>4 – 11</b>
<b>Number on roll</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Number of Students on Special Educational Needs Register</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Number of Students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Number of Catholics on roll</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Number of Other Christian Denominations</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Number of other Faiths</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>School address</b>	<b>St Helen's Catholic Primary West Street Hoyland Barnsley S74 9DL</b>

<b>Telephone Number</b>	<b>01226 742172</b>
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<b>Website</b>	<b>www.sthelenslive.net</b>

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners?**

The provision of Catholic education at St Helen's is outstanding. The school is a very caring, warm community. The ability of everyone to reach out to each other is clearly apparent in the warmth of the welcome everyone receives from the Headteacher and Staff. The Headteacher, the joint Religious Education Co-ordinators, the School Chaplain, the Parent Support Worker, the Governors and Staff of the school are all very committed to developing the Catholic life of the school in all areas. The behaviour of the children is excellent. Their prayerful, thoughtful and active participation in the school's outstanding liturgies, together with the provision of very meaningful and creative Religious Education, supports not only their own spiritual and moral development and the development of their Religious knowledge, but also makes significant impact on their families too.

The very detailed SEF demonstrates that the school knows itself well and is clear about plans for development. Central to all the work of the school is a commitment to the demands of legal requirements that is deeply rooted in gospel values. There is clear recognition that each member of the community is unique and loved by God and therefore worthy of respect. The school's mission statement is lived out on a daily basis. This impacts significantly on the community the school serves.

### **The effectiveness of any steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection**

In the last inspection four areas for further development were identified. All these areas have been addressed and moreover, in some cases, are areas where the school now has a real strength. The parish and the home are the main focus for sacramental preparation supported by significant input from the school. Since the last inspection the school has operated a number of models of Religious Education co-ordination. The needs of a small school, where each staff member often has to co-ordinate more than one subject area, has led the school to appoint two Religious Education Co-ordinators. The school benefits greatly from the wide skills base, expertise and experience of these two staff members, who operate so well together. They both demonstrate a high level of commitment and hard work in their role as Religious Education Co-ordinators. Their work on assessment procedures is clear evidence of their effectiveness. They have very successfully enhanced and developed assessment procedures based on Diocesan recommendations while also

exploring further developments, which may well provide a useful model for further developments at a Diocesan level. Differentiation which was an issue at the last inspection has been very successfully addressed. There is clear evidence of differentiation in the planning of lessons, the delivery, the level of support children are offered and the activities that are provided for them.

### **The capacity to further deepen the quality of Catholic education**

The school's capacity for deepening the quality of Catholic education is outstanding. The Headteacher is an inspirational figure in the school community. The school is part of an active and vibrant Federation of Catholic Primary Schools. Governors play a significant part and clearly demonstrate their role in the Catholic life of the school. They recognise the central role the school plays in the life of the wider community and value the significant impact the school has in providing opportunities for prayer and spiritual development for all members of the community. Parents, families, parishioners, staff in addition to the children all play their part in contributing to and benefiting from the Catholic life of the school. The school is steeped in its Catholic history and many generations are involved in the school. This firm foundation has great potential for further development enhanced by the recent appointments of a Chaplain to the Catholic Federation of Schools and a Parent Support Worker. Both these people have a clear vision of their role within the Catholic life of the school and the community it serves. Although each of these people is new to the school both already feel welcome, embraced and supported. Within that context their own commitment to their faith, their enthusiasm and their clear vision for the future put this school in an excellent position to continue deepening the quality of Catholic education.

## **THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **How effective are leadership and management in the development of the Catholic life of the school?**

The leadership of the school has aspirational views of what is possible. Leaders are quietly confident. They have a deep commitment to their faith and a common understanding of their responsibility to nurture each individual in their community, wherever that individual may be on the faith journey. This results in the promotion of a very high quality of integrated care and education. The Religious Education of the school community is led very effectively by the joint responsibility of the two Religious Education Co-ordinators who encourage an understanding that Religious Education is taught through every curriculum area and is best demonstrated through nurturing human wholeness is evidenced in the daily life of the school. Religious Education is subjected to vigorous monitoring and evaluation and the practice of the Co-ordinators is both reflective and pro-active. St Helen's is a very inclusive school where every child is able to achieve their potential. Staff bring a variety of skills and expertise to their teaching and are very open and supportive of each other. Religious Education resources are good and spending on Religious Education over three years is significantly above spending in other core subject areas. The school has excellent links with the parents and the wider community. Parish letters detail all

the activities in the school and parishioners are welcome into school. The Apostolic Blessing from the Pope, which is displayed in the school entrance, was a gift from parishioners and is clear evidence of the pride parishioners have in their parish school. Many parishioners and parents attend school liturgies and celebrations and value the opportunity to do so. The work of the recently appointed Chaplain will serve to further strengthen the links between parish and school. Governors are very involved in the life of the school. The Governor with responsibility for Religious Education is also a parishioner and his work on Children's Liturgy at Sunday Mass further enhances and supports the children's Religious Education, while also opening up opportunities for parishioners to become more involved with the school, the children and their families.

## **THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL: COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

### **How good is the quality of Collective Worship?**

The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding. Acts of Worship are held regularly as a whole school in addition to worship in class. Parents and parishioners are invited to assemblies led by the children. The "Statements of Belief" are a well embedded structure that is integrated both into Collective Worship and the daily life of the school in a very meaningful way. Special assemblies are held at key times of the year and serve to bring together the Church's Liturgical year, the children's experiences and the work of the school. So, for example, a Christingle Service held at the beginning of Advent incorporated the symbolism of the Christingle fruit; the reality of the Advent calendar presented in an extended form to include the full season of Advent and Christmas up to the Epiphany and the work of Mission Together. The Mission Together representative who works with the school had been invited to attend the ceremony and her work was formally acknowledged in the Service. This service was very well supported by families and parishioners. The school's Religious Education Governor, Chaplain and Family Resource Worker were also involved in the celebration.

The Headteacher, the School Chaplain, representatives of the governing body and parishioners work hard to strengthen links between parish and school and emphasise the central place of the Eucharist in the Catholic life of the school. The Headteacher is also a parishioner of St Helen's Church and initiates and leads the children and parishioners in the parish Christmas Eve Celebration.

A key feature of every classroom is the Religious Education display and prayer table. There is a good age appropriate supply of religious resources.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS**

### **How well do learners achieve in Religious Education?**

The children achieve well in Religious Education. Lessons are based on the 'Here I Am' programme. Activities are exciting, challenging and fun. Work is differentiated. Excellent use is made of ICT, Literacy, Art and Drama in the outstanding lessons

seen. Work with individual children or group work is extremely well supported by teaching assistants who are in clear professional partnership with the teachers. The well directed teaching assistants reinforce and support teaching and learning very effectively. They are a real strength of the school. Children have a good knowledge of and respect for faiths other than their own. Initiatives that are planned for further developing children's experiences of other faiths will serve to strengthen this good feature of the school. Cross-curricular opportunities in Religious Education are outstanding and contribute significantly to the pupils' outstanding achievements in Religious Education.

## **QUALITY OF PROVISION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

### **How effective are teaching and learning in Religious Education?**

The children's behaviour is excellent. They are warm, welcoming and polite. Their attitudes clearly demonstrate and recognise that they are in a secure environment where their unique value is recognised and appreciated. All lessons observed were good and the majority were outstanding. Children are confident and attentive. Lessons were marked by the exceptional enjoyment and progress of all learners. Lessons regularly involved discussions. Even the youngest children had a high degree of autonomy in their work. Another key feature of lessons was the way in which children respected each other, listened to each other and accommodated each others needs. ICT provision is a real strength of the school and its highly imaginative use in Religious Education is outstanding and impacts significantly on the quality of provision in Religious Education. The role of the Media Co-ordinator is highly valued by all members of the school community.

Parents received the 'Here I Am' parents' letter to inform them of the Religious Education topics and are also invited to school assemblies. Parents really value this information and their invitations. Many spoke of how it impacted not only on their children's spiritual development but also sparked interest and discussion in the home for the whole family.

### **How well does the Religious Education curriculum meet the needs and interests of the learners?**

The Religious Education curriculum fulfils the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Catholic schools and meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference by devoting at least ten per cent of teaching time to Religious Education. Children acquire a sound knowledge of the Catholic faith and tradition. Children and their families are able to relate this to their Christian backgrounds. The children also develop an understanding and respect for other faiths and cultures.

The individual needs of the children and their families are central to the ethos of the school. Many parents made reference to the way in which the headteacher leads the staff in taking a full interest in the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears of all school members and the whole school community. Everyone is treated with respect and dignity. The school community values the ways in which significant family

events are noted by the school and support is readily available. A number of references were made to the way in which the school and especially the headteacher offered support with bereavements. The school has access to a bereavement counsellor and the Family Resource Worker is Rainbows trained.

The provision for Special Educational Needs is outstanding. Children with special needs are totally integrated into the community. Their needs are well met. Parents value highly the education, the warmth and support that children with Special Educational Needs receive and speak enthusiastically of the family atmosphere, which the school provides. The curriculum is well planned, vibrant and exciting. Religious Education is totally integrated into the curriculum and together with the very clear policies and practice of EPR and PSHCE the children and their families are very well supported on their faith journeys and in their personal and social development.

The school council enables children to exercise responsibility in a very meaningful way. The children described their school as one that “cares about your needs”. They especially liked circle time, the outdoor equipment that is provided for them and the way in which dinner ladies help them find friends if they are alone in the playground. The school provides and facilitates a wealth of social activities for example Bonfire Evenings, Dancing Sessions, Ladies Evenings. These are well supported by the extended school community. In turn, the school supports community activities, for example Macmillan Nurses Day. The children are aware of wider global community by their work with Mission Together and Cafod. Parents from all backgrounds are empowered by the school’s support and there is a high level of support for neighbourhood and religious community activities. Work on community cohesion is excellent. The children are prepared well for adult life in and beyond their community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

### **How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education?**

Leadership and management in raising achievements and supporting all learners in Religious Education is outstanding. The outstanding and highly committed headteacher works closely with the Governing Body, the staff and especially the Religious Education Co-ordinators. In addition there is a strong partnership with the other schools in the Catholic Federation in bringing about, most effectively, a shared vision of security and excellence for all children. The very detailed SEF reflects the current very good practice and gives direction for future developments. The SIP (School Improvement Plan) has Religious Education as its number one priority. The Catholic life of the school encompasses everyone’s work. The CPD (Curriculum and Professional Development) needs of staff are served well. The Headteacher has been on Sabbatical. The school and other schools in the Diocese have benefited from his work, together with colleagues, on extending the Statements of Belief to a full programme. Other staff members have been supported through Sabbaticals and there are plans for this practice to continue. All staff are supported in accessing training opportunities offered by the Diocese and good systems are in place to

cascade the training in a very effective way. There are plans for staff to have opportunities for retreat, reflection and renewal.

The work of the Federation of Catholic schools enhances the quality of provision in training opportunities and there is clear evidence that for example INSET on Restorative Practice, Storytelling and Media has had profound and very beneficial impact on all pupils. The school commits a very generous budget share to Religious Education and money is well spent and contributes to the outstanding provision of Religious Education for all learners and strengthens their journey to human wholeness.

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<b>Summary of Inspection Judgements:</b>	
<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>The Catholic Life of the School</b>	
How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school?	<b>Outstanding</b>
How good is the quality of Collective Worship?	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Religious Education</b>	
How well do learners achieve in Religious Education?	<b>Outstanding</b>
How effective are teaching and learning in Religious Education?	<b>Outstanding</b>
How well does the RE curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?	<b>Outstanding</b>
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education?	<b>Outstanding</b>

Further copies of this report are obtainable from St Helen's Catholic Primary School or from the Diocese of Hallam Schools' Department, The Hallam Pastoral Centre, St Charles Street, Sheffield S9 3WU Tel: 0114 2566440