



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **St Joseph's Catholic Primary School**

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URN: 123846

Executive Head of School: Mrs Helen Taylor

Chair of Governors: Mr C Jarvis

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**Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

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Date of inspection: 26-27<sup>th</sup> January 2017

Date of previous inspection: October 2012

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington

Assisting Inspector: Mrs Celia Dolan

## **Description of the school**

St. Joseph's is a single form entry Catholic primary school, with 238 pupils on roll, 24% of whom are Catholic. Most of the Catholic children live in the parish of St. Joseph's. A lower than national average of 18% comes from ethnic minority backgrounds. Around 13% of pupils have English as an Additional Language (EAL). The number of children from ethnic minority backgrounds and those with EAL has increased over the last three years, and the majority come from Eastern Europe and the Philippines. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability make up 5.5% of the number on roll, which is below national averages. The average level of attainment on entry to the school matches national expectation.

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)**

**Grade 2**

This is a good school because:

- St. Joseph's is a fully inclusive school where pupils from all faiths and none are made welcome. The governing body and school leaders are fully committed to the promotion and nurturing of the school's Catholic life and mission as their first priority, and have employed very effective and robust processes to effect and monitor improvement. As a result the provision for Catholic life and religious education is now good.
- The pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. They demonstrate care and respect for each other, and their positive attitude to learning results in good progress.
- Leadership provides effective guidance and support to staff, making fruitful use of outside resources, advice, and diocesan training in its drive to develop and improve provision and outcomes for the majority of pupils.
- The quality of teaching is in the main good, resulting in good learning and achievement over time. Where there are weaker areas or any inconsistent practice, the school is taking swift and effective action to raise all teaching to the level of the best.

## **The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is good**

- The school's own self evaluation is comprehensive and honest, enabling strengths and weaknesses to be highlighted and action taken to improve practice and outcomes. The governing body is kept fully aware of the day to day life of the school, not only through the termly reports of the head teacher and the Lead for Distinctive Nature, but also through the proactive and challenging link governor for RE and the governor for the Distinctive Nature of the school.
- The areas for development noted in the last inspection have been systematically addressed, despite the intervening upheavals of staff turnover in the intervening years.
- The school has entered a period of stability, and has demonstrated the capacity, through already effective evaluative structures and much improved practice, to continue on its journey of improvement both in provision and outcomes.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Secure and refine teachers' skills in the assessment of pupils' work, by making fruitful use of the group moderation support from the Dunstan cluster of Catholic schools, and by building a portfolio of securely levelled work within the school.
- Raise the expectation from all teachers to encourage every opportunity for pupils to experience independent, research learning, which leads to creative, responsive and reflective writing on the topics they are covering in RE.
- Encourage and support teachers more systematically to further deepen their RE subject knowledge in order to be able to challenge their more able pupils confidently.

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

Grade 2

### a) The extent to which pupils understand, contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school

- The chaplaincy team, representing every year group, are beginning to take the lead in promoting the prayer life of the school, and are developing the skills of planning and organising their own liturgies. They are all working towards the very recently introduced Leaders in Faith award, and are encouraging others to do the same. For instance, some have already taken responsibility for the prayer tables in class, and produced a check list for others. They are excellent role models especially for the younger children. A typical response: 'Being a chaplain means that we have a responsibility to keep God in the centre of all we do';
- Pupils have a growing understanding of what it means to be in a Catholic school and how it differs from other schools. They accept and flourish in an atmosphere of faith and spirituality. They can articulate for instance, the impact that the prayer life of the school has on their view of life and their relationship with others. Their own composed prayers are very thoughtful and heartfelt;
- Although pupils have not been involved in a formal review of the school's Mission Statement, it is very much part of their lives and often brought to the fore in assemblies and lessons;
- Pupils contribute significantly through their response to questionnaires, providing essential feedback which is built into improvement plans. This might include reviewing the impact of liturgies, and suggesting how they could be improved;
- Pupils increasingly take on a range of responsibilities which show they are alert to the needs of others. For instance, they play an important role in raising money for charities both locally and further globally;
- Pupils have a genuine respect for those from different backgrounds. This is due to a growing understanding of different faiths, which they have studied and reflected on in RE. There is a real sense of belonging here shared by all regardless of faith or none;
- However, the links with the parish are not strong, partly because of the distance to the church of St. Joseph, the small proportion of Catholic children, and the constraints on the parish priest and deacon to cover the parish in Burnham-on-Sea. There is consequently less pupil participation in parish life and liturgies.

### b) How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Pupils come from a variety of faith backgrounds and practice. Most enter the school at levels of attainment and understanding of religious knowledge and practice, which are below expectation. They make good progress from the start, especially in Early Years where the children have an excellent introduction to RE through story, prayer and reflection, so that by the end of Key Stage 1 they are meeting expectations. The

Year 2 books exemplified this in the great variety of opportunities for the children in their written work

- At the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils are meeting their targets. Their written work indicates good progress over time, in particular their grasp of meaning and relevance, and learning from religion. Other groups such as those with SEN and disadvantaged students, make similar good progress because of effectively planned interventions and the pro active support of learning assistants;
- Discussions with pupils and responses in their written work show clearly that, as they move up the school, they become more confident in using religious language in a meaningful way. Their ability to learn independently, and with others, especially paired discussion, is also improving, with the rate of progress, however, dependent in large measure on the quality of teachers' knowledge, expectations, and challenge;
- Pupils are proud of their achievements and demonstrate a positive interest 'in learning new things and ideas', and feel confident enough to express their own opinions. When asked, pupils were positive about RE lessons, and are ready to be involved and challenged especially through art, drama, and more imaginative responses. They are able to think spiritually, ethically and theologically, and particularly to draw relevance to their own lives, and their personal response to what they believe. Their outstanding conduct in lessons and around the school reflects the school's successful strategies to promote the highest standards of behaviour.

### **c) How well pupils lead, respond to and participate in the Prayer Life of the School**

- All pupils irrespective of faith background participate fully, and feel included, in the prayer life of the school. They show reverence, attentiveness, and willingness to play their part, singing with great enthusiasm. They are becoming more involved in the planning and preparation of their liturgies and assemblies. They already have the examples and role modelling of the chaplaincy team, and as the teachers also become more confident in letting them take the initiative, so they, the pupils, will become more confident in taking more ownership of the prayer life of the school.
- The pupils value the many prayer opportunities during the school day, be it at the beginning of every lesson or the end of the day. They compose their own heartfelt prayers and reflections, displayed on the prayer tables. The sacramental and liturgical life of the school is reflected in the assemblies, the three annual Masses, and the celebrations throughout the Church's liturgical year of the life of Jesus, and the saints.
- The new chaplaincy team has already been pro-active in organising and planning assemblies for the younger pupils. For instance they presented an excellent reflection session for Year 3 on 'How God speaks to us' using a very effective frame for reflection. They are also enthusiastic in setting up the new prayer space in the playground, taking ownership in its planning and ideas for its use.

## How effective are leaders and governors in developing the Catholic Life of the school?

Grade 2

### a) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

- Leaders and governors very effectively promote, nurture and sustain the Catholic ethos of the school as their primary concern and care, and it is the main thrust of its strategic planning. The transforming influence of the executive head teacher in particular has resulted in rapid improvement over a short time.
- The governing body is a challenging, knowledgeable and practical influence in the life of the school. They meet all the statutory, canonical, and diocesan requirements fully. They are acquainted with and have reflected on the People of Hope document, how it can influence the school and this has been successfully carried through and fruitfully realised. Robust and reliable processes of self evaluation ensure that judgements are becoming more accurate. There is frequent detailed monitoring mainly through the link governor for RE and the Lead Governor for Distinctive nature, who report back to the full governing body. The school also asks parents, staff and pupils, through discussions and questionnaires, their views and suggestions for improvement, and as a result it has a realistic view of what has to be done to improve and grow, and has already demonstrated the capacity to follow through its objectives.
- There is at least one Inset day annually devoted specifically to Catholic life and spirituality. Governors attend where possible and take the lead in planning improvements in respect of Catholic life. They have taken up governor training opportunities after a thorough governors' skills audit. Leaders are very open to advice and support from outside agencies, including the diocese, and are reaching out to the other Catholic schools in the Dunstan cluster. This will benefit the school enormously.

### b) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the curriculum for Religious Education and relationship education, and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

- Leaders and governors use data and monitoring information intelligently and effectively, exercising careful oversight of the curriculum and learning outcomes. They receive termly reports from the RE leader and take part in learning walks around the school. Where necessary they challenge and hold staff to account, as is evident in a scrutiny of the minutes of governor's meetings, where there are always specific questions, and answers expected, regarding the quality and impact of the RE provision.
- Subject development plans are drawn up and used as working documents, which are added to or otherwise amended during the course of each term. They could be even further refined from general aims to more specific measurable objectives to be achieved over a stated time.

- The provision for staff induction and in service training is supportive for the teaching of RE. This is resulting in teachers becoming, for instance, more confident in assessment and in setting learning objectives, although there is still work to be done in these areas in order to improve pupil outcomes further.
- The subject leader is able to support teachers with advice and training. However, since there has been a change in her leadership role she is not as involved in teaching RE, modeling best practice and the interpretation of the syllabus. The school has addressed this by appointing a Shadow RE lead who will take over the Lead for RE in September.
- The link governor for RE led a staff training session on the Creation topic so that staff could reflect on its meaning and how to present it to the pupils.
- The lesson observations and work scrutinies carried out regularly by senior leaders and governors monitor the impact of both teaching quality and students' progress over time. This enables more effective CPD training and identifies strengths and weaknesses. As a result support packages for less confident teachers have been successfully put in place.

## **How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?**

**Grade 2**

### **a) The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education**

- Teaching is good across the school. It is effective in promoting purposeful learning, the engagement of the pupils, their enjoyment, and their overall good results. The pupils' excellent attitudes to learning have a strong impact on their progress and achievement. Learning assistants are involved in planning lessons with the teacher, so that interventions have a positive effect.
- Although not consistent across all years, teachers are encouraging more independent learning through challenging tasks, which better meet the pupil's individual abilities. The school is also aware of the constant need to encourage pupils to write more reflectively and at length.
- The school has identified weaker areas where there is insufficient challenge in terms of questioning or lower expectations of pupils' abilities. Where teachers have high expectations of pupils' presentation of work and intellectual effort, the pupils rise to the challenge and are able to contribute their own arguments and opinions. In a Year 4 lesson observed, the teacher encouraged full responses from the children to justify their opinions. The written task further encouraged this by writing in full sentences giving cogent reasons. Pupils are able to relate what they are learning to their own lives. Learning from religion is a real growing strength of the school.
- Where teaching is less effective, opportunities are sometimes missed to challenge the pupils to write more creatively and reflectively on what they are learning, rather than simply re telling stories or explanations.
- There are now more effective systems for the tracking and monitoring of pupil progress over time. The assessment and marking policies are becoming embedded, but the school's own scrutiny of pupils' written work reveals some discrepancy, on occasion, between the over generous levels given by an individual teacher, and the quality of the

actual work in their books. Teachers will become more adept at assessing progress with the support of shared moderation with the other schools in the Catholic cluster.

#### **b) The extent to which the Curriculum promotes pupils' learning**

- The RE curriculum meets all Bishops Conferences requirements. It is broad and balanced so that students can explore and develop their own values and beliefs. They explore themes such as prejudice, fairness, compassion and injustice, which they then link to the objects of their charity fundraising, and outreach to others in society who are more needy.
- The study of other world faiths is a strength of this inclusive school because it promotes tolerance, understanding, and respect for others beliefs, rather than ignorance and suspicion. It also inculcates an appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures. For instance, some outstanding work was done during the Faith Weeks on Islamic Art, the Jewish Synagogue and the Guru Nanak Gurdwara visits.
- Provision for sex and relationship education is in place and approved by the governors adhering to diocesan guidelines.
- The curriculum design promotes continuity and progress, and leads to good teaching and learning. It promotes spiritual, moral and vocational development and is taught through the lens of the Faith.
- The sacramental preparation programme for First Holy Communion is run in the parish but with very small numbers from the school, given the low percentage of Catholic children.

#### **c) The quality of the Prayer life provided by the School**

- The prayer life of the school is fully inclusive and joyful. Prayer punctuates the school day and is part of every celebration. There is now a focus on encouraging more pupils to organise and lead collective worship, following the excellent example of the chaplaincy team.
- The life of the parish unfortunately has little impact on the school because of geographical and logistical impediments. However, both the parish priest and deacon are welcome visitors to the school and the children understand who and what their roles are.
- Teachers and pupils have created colourful and thought provoking displays around the school, which remind the whole community of the liturgical cycle, the topics the pupils are currently studying, and are supportive of the school's vibrant Catholic life.
- Parents and carers are invited to attend Mass and assemblies, which they increasingly do, and the school is working to reach out to more parents and carers.

## Summary of Parental Questionnaires

All 35 returned questionnaires scrutinised were positive about the school and the quality of their children's education. Some typical responses included:

*'The school has a strong commitment to educating the whole child'*

*'We wanted our son to have a catholic education within an excellent school environment. We can't speak highly enough of the school. We have been so impressed by the support especially around special educational needs. We love to attend Mass and class worship at school although more of these events would be welcome'.*

*'Distinctive is the way staff and children treat each other, their peers and the caring atmosphere of all elements of the school'.*

*'I cannot rate the school highly enough; their approach to all things within the curriculum and extra activities is outstanding. They have done wonders for our children's confidence, well being and education. The staff are a credit to the school'.*

*'I think it educates our kids with or respect to other religions.....to be good people'.*

*'The school is a welcoming, happy place with a good set of core values and an ethos that we believe to be a good learning environment for our children'.*