



INSPECTION REPORT

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

St Joseph's Place, Devizes, SN10 1DD
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URN: 137371

Executive Headteacher: Mr M O'Keefe
Head of School: Mrs Y Wilkins
Chair of Governors: Mrs Abbie Peach.

**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**

Date of inspection: 21st- 22nd September 2017
Date of previous inspection: 6th-7th May 2013

Reporting Inspector: Mrs A Barrett
Additional Inspector: Mrs C Baron

Description of school

St. Joseph's is a smaller than average size primary school serving the parish of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, with 185 pupils on roll, 38% of whom are Catholic. The school takes pupils from the local area, which is in the small market town of Devizes. The majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds, with a small but growing percentage who speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils supported by the additional pupil premium funding is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils receiving support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.

The school has been through a period of transformation since the last Ofsted and Diocesan inspection, having moved from the Ofsted category of Special Measures to Good from 2015 to 2017.

The leadership capacity of the school was strengthened post-Ofsted by the appointment of an executive headteacher and head of school. In September 2017, a new head of school took up post.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 2

This is a good school because:

- Governors been highly effective in supporting the drive to improve both the Catholic life of the school and outcomes in RE. They have set the blueprint which will enable the school to continue to develop in these areas.
- There is a palpable sense of urgency for rapid improvement, with all working together to achieve this.
- There is a strong culture of collegiality amongst staff who actively support the Catholic ethos of the school.
- The executive headteacher has provided inspiring and calming leadership for all, placing Catholic ethos and values at the heart of all that the school does.
- The school is well regarded by parents and has good links with the parish.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning are a testament to the strong, caring ethos of the school. They are proud of their school and make good progress in RE.
- Subject leadership and co-ordination of RE is a strength of the school, with seamless transition and collaboration between the teachers responsible for this area.
- Links with the diocese are excellent, demonstrating high levels of engagement with the diocesan vision of collaboration.

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

- The newly constituted governing body and leadership team have been highly effective in supporting the drive to improve both the Catholic life of the school and outcomes in RE across the board.
- Governors and leaders have been highly successful in creating a culture where staff work collaboratively together. They are hugely supportive of the school's Catholic ethos and values, and are enthusiastic in maintaining strong, effective relations with pupils and their parents. Staff morale and their commitment to the Catholic life of the school is strong, with a developing and clearer understanding of the values underpinning provision.
- The school has a highly skilled leadership team who understand and can articulate the purpose of Catholic education and can share this understanding with staff.
- The recently appointed school's RE coordinator (Head of School) is an experienced and gifted practitioner in RE and has already made an impressive impact in a short period of time.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve systems by enabling governors to become more actively involved in the monitoring and evaluation process, in relation to provision for the Catholic life of the school and outcomes in RE.
- Encourage and support teachers in deepening their subject knowledge and understanding of RE, with a particular focus on the teaching of other faiths and the sacraments. This should include exploring more creative learning activities in order to engage and promote enjoyment in the subject.
- Consolidate the good progress being made in helping pupils to respond to, and participate in, the school's prayer life. This could be done by providing more opportunities to practise the skills of planning and organising their own assemblies and liturgies, and to evaluate the Catholic life of the school.

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

- Catholic life, and the pupils' contribution to it, continues to develop and grow and is becoming a real strength of the school. Pupils are gaining confidence in expressing their own views and beliefs due to the school's strong promotion of mission and social responsibility based on Gospel values. They are eager to take on responsibilities and play a part in developing the school's Catholic life when these opportunities are offered. This, in turn, enables them to develop and grow in their faith.
- Pupils are aware of, and can articulate, what makes their school distinctive and they respond positively to the many opportunities throughout the day to participate in prayer. They enjoy being prayer monitors, contributing to the classroom prayer tables and prayer trees.
- Pupils are proud of their school and benefit greatly from the strengthening links with the parish through whole school and class masses and attendance at wider diocesan events such as Mass at Clifton Cathedral and the Youth Chaplaincy Commissioning service.
- Pupils understand the importance of service and respond readily to the needs of others. They are regularly and actively involved in activities linked with CAFOD and a range of other charity initiatives such as the Shoe Box Appeal and Harvest Family Fast Day. In addition, Year 6 annually raise money through their Enterprise Project for a chosen charity. They have been especially energised by the chaplaincy-initiated 'Make a difference' project supporting 'Julia's House', a local hospice. Opportunities to develop service to others includes older pupils undertaking 'paired reading' for two years, accompanying Year R to Mass and lunch, and undergoing training as 'play leaders'.
- Chaplaincy is an area of growth within the school. The chaplaincy team enjoy and have been actively involved in writing the school prayer, engage in charitable activities and leading assemblies and are starting to engage in monitoring activities. Previous developments have included linking with The Year of Mercy and celebrating RE work with a display in the school entrance hall. The school recognises that time is now ripe to consolidate and build on the good progress to date in order to enable pupils to become more confident through practising the skills of planning and organising their own assemblies and liturgies.
- Pupils are tolerant of each other, demonstrate a mature and growing understanding of respect for others and a willingness to listen to different viewpoints which is effective in enabling them to reflect on their own choices and behaviour.

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- Pupils' good attitudes and high levels of respect and courteousness are due in no small measure to the excellent relationships modelled by staff and the clarity with which the school's values and religious ethos are articulated in its daily life and routines.

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

- Overall, taking account of their different starting points, the proportion of pupils making expected progress is good and demonstrates an upward trend in attainment and progress.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning are a testament to the ethos of the school. Positive teacher-pupil rapport and classroom management are strong characteristics of lessons and are supported throughout by a positive climate for learning. This, coupled with highly effective systems which enable leaders to know what works well and what needs improving, has made a significant impact on improving pupil outcomes in RE.
- Pupils are motivated, engaged and keen to do well in RE and respond positively to the opportunities now provided. Discussions with pupils highlighted that this could be further strengthened by providing more opportunities for all pupils to engage in active learning activities, especially when learning about Bible stories. For example, more planned use of music, art, drama and dance would do much to engage and develop their knowledge and understanding and enhance their spiritual development.
- The school's focus on AT2 (Learning from Religion) is playing an important part in enhancing pupils' enjoyment of the subject and continues to pay dividends in relation to improving the quality both of written work and oral contributions. The school is well aware of the importance of an ongoing focus on AT2 and already share good practice in RE through staff meetings. They have identified that the next step is to develop learning partners amongst staff in order to observe one another's quality teaching in RE.
- Pupils are growing in confidence in their ability to use religious language in a meaningful way and are becoming increasingly religiously literate and reflective in their oral responses. Across the school there is an increasing sense of purpose about learning in religious education, with pupils responding well to the praise and rewards they receive for good effort.

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

- Pupils' response to, and participation in, the prayer life of the school has significantly improved since the last inspection. Prayer is now central to the life of the school, with pupils responding positively to a range of formal and informal prayer opportunities which helps extend their knowledge of different prayer styles.
- Pupils, irrespective of faith background, value these opportunities and readily participate in the routine prayer life of the school, demonstrating respect and reverence during individual and collective prayer. In particular, the highly effective, child-centred, headteacher assembly on the Sunday Gospel engendered an infectious and prayerful atmosphere, with all pupils fully engaged in the process and clearly at ease with each

other when singing and praying. Staff approach worship with reverence and commitment, providing good role models for children.

- Pupils respond positively to the growing opportunities to organise and lead prayer and worship through class assemblies, or as members of the chaplaincy team. Their willingness to play their part was observed in the chaplaincy-led assembly in which all took part.
- The liturgical and sacramental life of the church is reflected in the assemblies, Masses, and the celebrations throughout the Church's year. However, pupils' ability to talk about the sacraments, in particular, and explain their meaning and importance is underdeveloped and should be an area to focus on in the RE curriculum.
- Leaders recognise that opportunities for pupils to be involved in reviewing and evaluating the prayer life of the school are at an embryonic stage, with the focus having been placed on improving teaching and accelerating progress when placed in 'Special Measures' by Ofsted. The time is now ripe to build on the good progress made and work with staff, through sharing good practice, to enable pupils to participate in the school's evaluation of its Catholic life and mission and to be part of planning improvements to it.

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.

- The newly constituted governing body and leadership team have been highly effective in supporting the drive to improve both the Catholic life of the school and outcomes in RE across the board. They have set the blueprint which will enable the school to continue to develop in these areas. The links with St Edmund's are a model of good practice for collaborative working.
- The executive headteacher has provided inspiring and calming leadership for all, placing Catholic ethos and values at the heart of all that the school does.
- Leaders and governors are deeply committed to promoting, nurturing and sustaining the school's Catholic ethos, providing a challenging but supportive environment for all. There is a palpable sense of urgency for rapid improvement, with all working together to achieve this.
- Governors and leaders have set the tone for change and have created a culture where staff work collaboratively together. They are supportive of the school's Catholic ethos and values, and are enthusiastic in maintaining strong, effective relations with pupils and their parents. Staff morale and commitment to the Catholic life of the school is strong, with a developing and clearer understanding of the values underpinning provision.

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- The commitment to building strong community collaboration between school, church and local parishioners is strong. Parents spoke effusively about the progress since the last inspection, valuing the high quality of relationships and welcoming open-door approach.
 - The Catholic mission of the school is prioritised by all leaders and governors, who ensure that all statutory and canonical responsibilities are met. Governors are kept informed, through the executive headteacher's reports, about ongoing developments in relation to the school's Catholic life and the monitoring of this. Although governors have been involved in the evaluation process, this has been tangential. The time is now appropriate for governors to become more actively involved in the monitoring and evaluation process, working alongside the leadership team.
 - Links with the diocese are excellent, demonstrating high levels of engagement with the diocesan vision of collaboration. In addition, the executive headteacher and head of school serve on CCDEF Strategic Board and the Mission and Ethos Committee, respectively. Governors and leaders attend all appropriate diocesan training.
 - As an Academy, governors and school leaders have played a crucial role in ensuring that the Catholic nature of the school is at the heart of all Academy documentation (relating to the DFE and Diocese). They have strengthened this commitment and further supported Catholic Education in Wiltshire through the Wiltshire Catholic Partnership.
 - The spiritual life of the staff is an important aspect of school life. Staff prayer meetings take place on a Friday morning and are led by the head of school, a gifted practitioner. This is highly effective in helping to bind staff together in commitment and in unity of purpose, sharing the same goals and values of the school's mission.
 - The leadership team are committed to enabling pupils to gain confidence in responding to, and participating in, the school's prayer life. However, they are aware that there is still work to be done to ensure that pupils are given more opportunities to plan and lead prayer and worship independently, to use different prayer styles and to make effective links between scripture and religious seasons and feasts.

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

- The new governing body have been highly effective in working closely with leaders to develop an informed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development in relation to its provision for religious education. They fulfil all their statutory and canonical responsibilities.
- Leaders and governors use of data and monitoring information to evaluate the school's performance in RE in order to inform future improvements has been very effective. This has been a strong focus since the last inspection and has played a significant part in improving outcomes in the subject.
- The executive headteacher, an accredited School Improvement Partner, ensures that there is a clear focus on using data to identify learning needs and evaluate the impact of

interventions. All evaluations, monitoring and data analysis inform the professional development focus for the coming term and for links within the diocese.

- There is now an established programme for systematic monitoring activities, related to teaching and learning, which has enabled leaders and governors to gain an informed understanding of strengths and areas for development in RE. This has included triangulation of evidence generated through observations as part of the appraisal cycle, book monitoring, data analysis and moderation.
- The detailed termly analysis of progress and attainment in RE, which is shared with teachers, enables targeted intervention for individual pupils. This, coupled with whole school INSET in the summer term, has not only heightened the importance of RE as a core subject but has also enabled teachers to be clear about their accountability for their pupils' progress in this area. This has been embraced by all staff.
- Governors are regularly informed by reports written by the subject leader and executive headteacher and are in the process of embarking upon a full self-evaluation and action plan for RE which will be reviewed in January 2018. Governors have rightly identified, as part of their next steps, the need to be more actively involved in the monitoring process.
- Subject leadership and co-ordination of RE is undoubtedly a strength of the school, with seamless transition and collaboration between teachers responsible for this area. The recently appointed head of school, who now acts as co-ordinator for RE, is a highly experienced and gifted practitioner. She is successfully building on the excellent work done by her predecessor and together they make a formidable team for the good of staff and pupils.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 2

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

- Leaders and governors have been successful in creating a culture of collegiality amongst staff who, in turn, actively support the Catholic ethos of the school. Professional dialogue in RE is now common practice, with all staff committed to sharing good practice and asking for ideas and support when needed.
- Teachers are now more confident and proficient in promoting purposeful RE. Teachers' excellent rapport with their pupils has engendered positive attitudes to learning and pride in their work, resulting in good outcomes for all.
- The drive to focus on teaching and learning across all subjects, including RE, has enabled teachers to become more proficient in using assessment to set targets for individuals and groups. Detailed tracking records are kept for each pupil and are used effectively to identify individual learners 'at risk', and to monitor the performance of cohorts.
- Teaching is typically good across the school, with some outstanding practice in both key stages. The calm, purposeful atmosphere in lessons promotes engaged and enthusiastic

learners who are well motivated and who sustain good levels of concentration. Lessons are well planned and resourced, with teachers demonstrating an ongoing commitment to improving their subject knowledge and practice. A good range of teaching styles, including strong questioning skills, are employed, but this is not yet fully consistent across the board.

- The emphasis on strengthening pupils' AT2 experiences (learning from religion) has been effective in developing pupils' ability to reflect on what is learnt and should remain a focus.

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

- The RE curriculum meets all *Bishops' Conference* requirements, is based on the *God Matters* programme, and is an ongoing focus for development. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and vocational development are effectively promoted across the school and taught through 'the lens of faith'. The school recognises that the RE curriculum needs to be further developed to include more detailed study of other faith traditions, and this should be implemented as a matter of priority.
- The school's plans to link the '*God Matters*' and PSHE programme with relationship education, will further strengthen RE provision and ensure a more holistic and coherent approach overall.
- The provision for relationship and sex education is well planned and is consistent with the teaching of the Church and diocesan guidelines.

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

- The school provides good opportunities through its prayer life for pupils to develop spiritually. This includes daily acts of worship and prayers at key points of the day, with an ever-increasing focus on encouraging pupils to lead and organise these.
- The school's introduction of child friendly versions of Sunday's readings and scripture through 'Wednesday Word' has proved effective in cementing links between school, home and parish. These are displayed prominently in each classroom and in the school entrance. This reading is referred to by teachers during the day and often forms the focus for an assembly.
- The Church seasons and feasts are focal points in the school's life and are celebrated by all. The school benefits from having the church on its doorstep and has developed excellent links with the parish, including membership of the Pastoral Council. Parents, Governors and other community members are invited to attend class assemblies and school Mass in the church and many do.
- Displays in and around the school are vibrant and supportive of the school's Catholic life and child centred ethos.

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- The prayer room provides an area of quiet reflection for both staff and pupils. This excellent resource is currently under used and could be further developed and used in order to enhance prayer opportunities for all. Plans are in hand to address this.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 42 parental questionnaires received. All were extremely positive about the school. A small number of parents requested being kept informed about their child's progress in RE and SRE.

Some typical responses included:

'The underlying Catholic values'

'Welcoming, lovely, friendly school'

'It is a lovely, family orientated school'

'It is a strong community and staff, pupils and parents have shown resilience over the last few years'

'The leaders and the teachers are all so lovely and so fair'

'The passionate staff. They are the school's glue!'

'Great environment for my kid to be in'