



INSPECTION REPORT

St. Joseph's Catholic College

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D/ES Number:

URN: 136980

Headteacher: Mr Paul Hughes

Chair of Governors: Mr S Lake

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: 16-17th October 2013
Date of previous inspection: November 2008

Reporting Inspector: Joseph Skivington
Additional Inspector: Patricia Landers

Description of School

St. Joseph's is a larger than average Catholic college which converted to academy status in 2011. It has 1,257 students on roll, 87% of whom are baptised Catholic. The majority are of White British background but there is a rich mix of ethnic minorities and a larger than average proportion of students with EAL. The number with special educational needs and FSM is below average. The new principal has just taken up the headship, succeeding the previous post holder who left in March.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

St. Joseph's provides a good education in RE for all its students. It is a fully inclusive, distinctively Catholic community where all are welcome and accepted as individuals regardless of background. The ethos in RE is characterised by openness to all and fruitful links with the parents, the parish, and the wider community. Pupils contribute well to the Catholic life of the college and respond well to the very good provision for spiritual development led by the charismatic and inspiring school chaplain. The outstanding results from the religious education programme have been sustained since the last inspection, owing to the outstanding leadership of the religious education department. Those students with special educational needs achieve as well as the others pupils in RE because of effective interventions, proactive support in lessons, and tasks clearly suited to their learning needs. The religious education programme makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The school is not yet outstanding because the overall quality of education provided in the school does not yet reflect Diocesan expectations and actions taken to improve the school by the new principal have not yet had time to demonstrate their impact.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

Grade 2

The college's capacity to sustain the quality of care and education it provides is good. The areas for development noted at the last inspection have been addressed effectively, in particular the training days for spiritual inset, and the promotion of RE through other subjects on the curriculum.

Despite the protracted leadership and management problems the school has had to face in recent months, it has sustained the Catholic life of the college, thanks to the singular inspiration of the chaplain and the outstanding leadership of the head of RE. The new principal is rapidly assessing and planning to ensure the college will become once more outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- To provide diocesan training for any newly reformed governing body so that they can make a more knowledgeable and challenging input into the nurturing of the distinctively Catholic mission of the college.
- To encourage student led initiatives contributing to the Catholic life of the college, and to hand over even more responsibility to more students to plan and present their own liturgies based on the existing good practice.
- To embed and develop further the valuable impact of assessment for learning.

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

Grade 2

A good number of students are involved in the Catholic life of the college and make a positive contribution to it, not least by their positive behaviour, which contributes to their own learning and the ethos of the college. They feel their voice is heard through more frequent opportunities to feedback their opinions and ideas via student and parent voice. The Leaders in Faith award scheme is being rolled out across all key stages, a scheme that provides a practical focus and easily measured objectives, to encourage a more active commitment to the Catholic ethos of the college from every individual young person. This is working well in Year 8. The college is also planning a re visit of its mission statement, when students and parents will be able to explore what it means for them and their role in nurturing its Catholic ethos. For example, more students' playing a more active part on the college's chaplaincy team with real responsibility and ownership in initiating and planning events celebrating the Church's liturgical year, and contributing to the evaluation of the college's distinctive nature. Students absorb the shared values lived out in the Catholic ethos of the college and have a sound awareness of spiritual and moral matters which they are able to articulate well, but they need to contribute more to evaluating the distinctive nature of the college. They respond generously to the needs of others beyond the college, and this makes a valuable contribution to the welcoming openness and inclusivity of the college. Many are involved in fundraising for a variety of charities both home and overseas, as well as outreach to the local community and local charities. Some have also benefited from the opportunity to go on retreat to Kintbury and have shared their experience with others on their return.

Their response to and participation in the prayer life of the school is good. They act with reverence and are willing to prepare and participate in liturgies and assemblies, taking their steer from the staff chaplaincy group. Some sixth form students have produced a beautiful collection of prayers in the form of a booklet which is used for class prayers and assemblies, which also make use of music and drama to enhance engagement. Students have a good understanding of the religious seasons and feasts, as well as the use of scripture and other forms of prayer. They are at ease when praying and appreciate what is taking place. Much of the leadership and initiative, however, comes from the staff and in particular the enthusiasm and inspiration of the school chaplain.

The RE department consistently delivers outstanding results at GCSE level; indicating the excellent progress and achievement over time. At Key Stage 3 all students including different groups, make expected progress, with many exceeding expectation. This excellent progress quickens in Key Stage 4. The results at GCSE level in 2013 were very pleasing, with 84% of students achieving grades A*-C, well above the national average. A particular strength is pupils' reflection on what they are

learning and its relevance to their lives, and their enjoyment of learning, which inspires many to continue studying RE in the Sixth Form.

Sixth formers follow the A Level Philosophy and Ethics course, or the NOCN Level 2 Award, with both achieving 100% pass rate. Students have responded well to the NOCN course and this is reflected in improved attendance and student pass rate.

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

Grade 2

Leadership and management has gone through a recent period of change, with the previous principal leaving, and the new principal only in post for a few weeks. The Catholic ethos of the college is a priority. Feedback from staff and students is sought through the PASS questionnaires. Care has been taken to keep alive the mission of the college, especially at the start of the academic year. The college has ensured regular diocesan training for all RE and chaplaincy staff on spirituality and Catholic education. The staff pray together regularly, and in 2010 took part in a retreat at Kintbury, an experience which should be repeated in the future. Prayer life and liturgies are monitored and reviewed, the chaplain and head of RE playing a significant role as middle managers in reviewing outcomes. The college's development plan objectives are likewise regularly reviewed and re shaped. The effectiveness of the new principal is already seen in the raised morale of the staff, the students' good care for one another and good relationships between staff and students, with a great determination to move the college on once again to outstanding. The foundation governors have recognised the need for diocesan and other training so that they become a thoroughly knowledgeable and challenging body. The link governor despite many other commitments on his time supports the chaplain and head of RE whenever possible.

There is a clear policy promoted by governors and senior staff to promote community cohesion with the result that the college has an openness to all, all are included in its life and its generous outreach to the local and the global community is a real strength. The college collaborates with other schools and participates in community undertakings, including local charities. The curriculum provides an exploration of other faiths, and good use is made of resources.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 1

Provision for prayer life is outstanding, a real strength of the college, thanks in large measure to the indefatigable efforts of the school chaplain to meet very effectively the spiritual needs of the students, be it through assemblies and liturgies, or the opportunities for reflection such as the student prayer group. There are many occasions during the day for spiritual nourishment through prayer and moments of reflection. The liturgical year is well marked, planned, and celebrated, particularly Advent, Lent and Holy Week, with the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Each event is reviewed to determine how it could be bettered and made more relevant and engaging. The parish deacon works closely with the chaplain. There are many opportunities for retreats, or involvement in groups such as the HCPT. One or two students have been commissioned as Eucharistic Ministers, becoming excellent role models for others.

The RE curriculum successfully meets the needs of all groups of pupils, as well as meeting the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education requirements, such as the allocation of time. Relationship education is dealt with sensitively and clearly from a Catholic standpoint and the policy has been updated with governors' approval. Attendance at the Diocesan training ensured leaders are up to date with curriculum developments. The beliefs of other faiths are explored through topics in the schemes of work. Resources are well managed, and ICT, art and music

particularly are used imaginatively to colour and enrich the learning experience. The colourful artwork and displays reinforce the RE topics, or liturgical seasons the pupils are studying, they affirm the creators and educate others, and visibly declare the Catholic ethos of the college. Resources to support teaching, and to enliven and enrich the schemes of work, are good. The curriculum makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. The department continually reviews curriculum content, and reflects on how better to meet the learning needs and abilities of the students; for example, introducing St. Mark's Gospel in Year 10, or tightening entry requirements for the Philosophy and Ethics course.

The quality of teaching and purposeful learning within RE is outstanding, with good and outstanding practice observed during the inspection. Outstanding teaching enables the students to learn really well because it engages their interest and provides challenge, so that they themselves do the work and make the intellectual effort. Group and paired work were especially effective strategies because they provided peer learning and assessment. The scrutiny of written work shows evidence of marking that is both helpful and consistent, and encourages a dialogue between teacher and pupil. Pupils' work and behaviour in lessons is excellent, keen to do their best for their teachers, as well as genuinely enthusiastic about the subject. Their enjoyment is clearly evident.

Assessment procedures are well embedded, including excellent tracking processes to measure progress. The data is used very effectively to inform lesson planning and shape learning objectives which are well matched to learning needs. The effective and fruitful structure of lesson observations enables the best practice in assessment for learning to be shared rapidly throughout the college.