



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

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

Bristol Road, Portishead, Bristol BS20 6QB

Telephone: 01275 848367

e-mail address: stjosephs.pri@n-somerset.gov.uk

DfE Number: 109238

Headteacher: Mrs Elaine Jackson

Chair of Governors: Mr Michael Flexman

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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: 29-30<sup>th</sup> September 2016

Date of previous inspection: July 2011

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington

Assisting Inspector: Mrs Michele Marshall

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## Description of the school

St. Joseph's is a single form entry Catholic primary school, with 220 pupils on roll, 72% of whom are Catholic. Most children live in the parish of St. Joseph's. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. Latterly, a wider range of ethnic minority pupils have joined the school community. The proportion of pupils from ethnic groups is approximately 14%. Pupils with special educational needs make up 11% of the number on roll. The average level of attainment on entry to the school matches national expectation.

The head teacher joined the school in September 2015

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

Grade 2

This is a good school because:

- the governing body and all leaders are fully committed to the promotion and nurturing of the school's Catholic life and mission as their first priority, and have successfully maintained its vibrant Catholic ethos through recent challenging times;
- the senior leadership led by the inspirational head teacher are relentless in their commitment to ensuring the highest quality of Catholic education, with the result that the school has made significant steps towards becoming an outstanding school;
- it is a fully inclusive school where pupils from all faiths and none are made welcome, and all show respect and genuine interest and care towards each other;
- the behaviour of pupils and their care for others is excellent. They are role models for each other and this contributes enormously to the spirituality and ethos of the school; their behaviour for learning is positive, they enjoy their RE studies, and they make good progress over time;
- the quality of teaching is typically good with some outstanding practice;
- 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;
- pupils are proud of their Catholic school, and willingly embrace the many opportunities to grow in their spiritual lives, so that they internalise and live out the values promoted, and come to understand the impact of faith in their daily lives.

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

Grade 2

- This is a school that knows itself well because it has embedded rigorous and reliable procedures for self evaluation; these enable strengths and weaknesses to be highlighted and action taken to improve practice and outcomes. The governing body's Faith and Ethos committee, including the link governor for RE, meet regularly to monitor and evaluate the school's Catholic life and RE, and in turn it reports back to the full governing body. The school 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 amply demonstrated the capacity to follow through its objectives.
- There is a positive commitment from every member of the staff to work together to achieve the best for the pupils, as well as promoting Catholic values across all the subjects. Staff morale is good and they are excellent role models for their charges.

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- The areas for development noted in the last inspection have been systematically addressed, particularly the ongoing embedding of consistency in the marking of pupils' work. The recent review of the marking policy has brought a new focus to increasing the effectiveness of marking in driving progress over time. This school has the capacity, through already effective evaluative structures and practice, to continue on its journey towards being an outstanding school.

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

- Embed teacher's skills in the assessment of pupils' work, especially their more extended, reflective pieces of writing, so that a clear and reliable picture of individual progress can be used to set appropriate challenging learning objectives,
- Raise the quality of all teaching to match existing best practice, particularly through the use of challenging questioning, which should check and secure pupils' understanding, as well as encouraging them to make real intellectual effort.

### **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**

- pupils have a growing understanding of what it means to be in a Catholic school and what 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. Many were involved in reviewing the school mission statement in 2012, and presenting it in child friendly language. It is prominently displayed around the school and frequently referred to;
- pupils contribute significantly through their response to questionnaires, providing essential feedback which is built into improvement plans. This includes reviewing the impact of liturgies, and suggesting how they could be improved, such as writing deeper reflections, producing more eye-catching images illustrating scripture readings, and successfully encouraging the take up of Prayer Bags;
- 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 afield such as Cafod, Borderlands, and the Clifton Children's Society;
- 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, which feeds into their understanding of British values and culture;
- the chaplaincy team, comprising over twenty older pupils, representing every year group, takes the lead in promoting the prayer room, where many gather together voluntarily during the day, and are developing the skills of planning and organising their own liturgies very successfully They are all working towards their Leaders in Faith award, and are encouraging others to do the same. They are excellent role models especially

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for the younger children. There are strong links with the parish, and pupils participate and lead both school and parish 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 in line with expectation. They make good progress from the start so that by the end of Key Stage 1 they are meeting expectations. At the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils are meeting their targets with some exceeding expectation. Other groups such as those with SEN and disadvantaged students, make similar good progress because of very effective 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, important literacy skills have been secured, and they become more confident in using religious language in a meaningful way. Their ability to learn independently, and with others, is also improving, demonstrated in the quality of some research type homework and their paired discussions. However, they sometimes lack the opportunity and challenge to discuss more deeply in lessons, and then to write more reflectively and at length in their books;
- 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 interviewed gave high marks to RE for enjoyment but also commented they would like to know more clearly where they are and what concrete steps they need to take to get to the next level. 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. This could be encouraged even further: they already have the examples and role modelling of the chaplaincy team, and as the teachers 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. This is an area already identified by the school itself and being successfully addressed.
- They 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, and were involved in leading the very imaginative internal Pilgrimage for the Year of Mercy, which processed around and through the school. Many also join the parish priest in saying the Rosary during the month of October;
- the sacramental and liturgical life of the school is reflected in the assemblies, Masses, and the celebrations throughout the Church's liturgical year of the life of Jesus, and the saints. Pupils contributed to choosing the patron saint of their class, researched their lives, and celebrate their feast day with Mass or assembly. In this way they are provided with inspiring role models and this contributes enormously to their spiritual, moral and vocational development.

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## 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 inspiring 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. The governors' strategic challenge in 2013 was to reflect on how a People of Hope influence the school and this has been successfully carried through and fruitfully realised;
- robust and rigorous processes of self evaluation ensure that judgements are becoming more accurate and reliable. This is achieved mainly by constant monitoring through the Spirituality and Ethos committee, who report back to the full governing body, but just as importantly by asking parents, staff and pupils their opinions as to what could be better. As a result of their feedback, the school leadership knows itself very well, can more accurately assess the impact of its actions, and can quickly re shape its improvement planning where necessary. A ring binder logs every assembly and liturgy to include the impact of hymns, prayers and the extent of the children's participation. Even the Church Visits handbook incorporates in its reviews 'an even better if' comment which is geared to maximising the impact of every subsequent activity;
- the spiritual life of the staff has not been neglected. Staff prayers and Inset days on spirituality and RE have been included in every year's timetable. This is binding the staff together in commitment and unity of purpose, sharing the same goals and values of the school's mission. There is at least one Inset day annually devoted specifically to Catholic life and spirituality;
- as a result of the school's monitoring it was found that progression of the formal prayers the children learn was not evident. Work was done on this in 2015-16 to ensure that now teachers understand the expectations for their own year group in relation to the prayers which the children should know.

### 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;
- 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 do not remain as general aims or wishes, but instead are measurable objectives to be achieved over a stated time;
- the provision for staff induction and in service training is particularly supportive for the teaching of RE. This is resulting in teachers becoming, for instance, more confident in

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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, modelling the implementation of the syllabus, and the schemes of work. Likewise, 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, as well as planning at all levels.

## **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 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;
- teaching is good with some outstanding practice. 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;
- the quality of teachers' questioning is on occasion inconsistent, which results in missed opportunities to stretch students even further, or failing to check that they really did understand before moving on;
- the assessment and marking policies are becoming embedded, but the 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. However, in conversation most pupils expressed their appreciation for the help given by teachers in their comments and marking.

### **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. 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.

### **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;

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- the parish priest makes an important and valued contribution to the spiritual life of the school and reflects its role in the wider mission of the parish and the universal Church. The Year Six pupils enjoyed a day retreat in the parish church;
  - both 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. During the inspection there was an impressive number at assembly, and this is a typical feature of the strong links between parents, school and parish.

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## Summary of Parental Questionnaires

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

*'St. Joseph's remains a super school which provides a balance of academic and social life skills to its pupils. We are very happy with the dedication and care provided by the teachers, and would like to acknowledge the positive impact that Mrs Jackson has had on the overall performance and leadership within the school community'.*

*'I would just like to comment on how much we appreciate the family atmosphere at St. Joseph's. There is a strong Christian Ethos and my child feels safe and secure'.*

*'I am always welcome at school and my child is very happy. We appreciate the caring atmosphere. (The head teacher's) door is always open'.*

*'No worries! Very happy. A Christian school'.*

*'All staff, not only teachers, take the time to get to know the pupils. The school is very nurturing and our son has been very happy at St. Joseph's'.*

*'Like the attitudes and ethos of the school. Staff very welcoming'.*

*'Children progress well from their starting points. Excellent reputation for behaviour, and providing a safe and caring nurturing environment'.*