



INSPECTION REPORT

St Joseph's Catholic College

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URN: 136980

Executive Principal: Mr P Hughes
Head of School: Mr J Giles
Chair of Governors: Canon J Cunningham

**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: 6th/7th December 2018
Date of previous inspection: 16th/17th October 2013

Reporting Inspector: Mrs A Barrett
Additional Inspector: Mrs B McLaughlin

Description of school

St. Joseph's is a larger than average 10-form entry 11-16 Catholic secondary academy in Swindon. The college serves the parishes of St. Mary's, Holy Rood, Holy Family, St. Peter's and Wroughton in Swindon. There are 1,276 students on roll, 81% of whom are baptised Catholic and 9% from other Christian denominations and from other faiths. The remaining students are from families who have not declared a faith.

The proportion of students who have an SEN statement or an educational health and care plan is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average and those speaking English as an additional language is also well above. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium is below the national average.

There have been significant changes to the college structure and leadership and governance since the last Section 48 inspection. In September 2017, the principal became executive principal of St Joseph's Catholic College and Holy Cross Catholic Primary and the vice principal became head of school at St Joseph's. In addition, until August 2018, the college operated for students 11-19, with the post 16 element of the curriculum now suspended for the foreseeable future. The structure of chaplaincy has also changed, from having a school chaplain to a chaplaincy team whose members are principally from the RE department but also include staff from across the college. There have also been significant changes in staffing within the RE department. The school is also a member of the Samuel Catholic Partnership, working with its partner primary schools.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 2

- The college's strong Catholic ethos pervades every aspect of its life and is highly valued by all its members due to the strong commitment of leaders and governors.
- Students benefit significantly from the college's strong, inclusive community, enriched by its ethnic diversity and high quality of relationships between staff and students.
- The behaviour of students is exemplary; they are acutely alert to the needs of others and seek justice for all within and beyond the college community.
- The quality of pastoral care shown to all members of the community, both students and staff, is outstanding
- The chaplaincy provision is highly effective in supporting and promoting the Catholic life of the school. 'Faith in action' is a model of good practice in the college.
- Overall, students make good progress in religious education (RE).
- Students enjoy their learning in RE because of the excellent relations engendered by their teachers and the engaging approaches to teaching in the subject.
- The senior leader for RE is an outstanding practitioner and role model for the department with a clear vision for her department, which is shared by all.

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- Prayer is central to the life of the college for all students, whatever their faith background, and is the core of every college celebration.
 - The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The capacity of the school community to improve is good

The capacity of the school to improve is good. The three areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection have been effectively addressed in the context of the significant changes to the college structure that are outlined above. In particular, good progress has been made to encourage more student-led initiatives that contribute to the Catholic life to the college. However, the action point relating to providing training 'for any newly reformed governing body' is still pertinent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement a more formal system for evaluating and reporting on the impact of actions taken to improve the Catholic life and prayer life of the school.
- Ensure that all new governors attend appropriate diocesan training and that appropriate support is provided to enable the new link governor (when appointed) to provide challenge and support in monitoring and evaluating the college's provision for RE, Catholic life and prayer life.
- Review the provision for RSE, especially at Key Stage 4 (KS4), to ensure appropriate linkage with the PSHE and citizenship programme. Leaders and governors should monitor this in order to ensure consistency of approach, especially in relation to those aspects which are taught within PSHE and citizenship.

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

- The college's strong Catholic ethos pervades every aspect of its life and is highly valued by all its members. Students are confident and enthusiastic in articulating the distinctiveness of their Catholic college. They have a clear understanding of the college motto 'Laus Deo Semper' (Praise God Always) and can relate it, with ease, to their daily life.
- Students value and respect the Catholic tradition of the college, its mission, and its strong links with the parish communities. Irrespective of their faith background, they are confident in expressing pride in belonging to the college and in their own religious and cultural identity and beliefs.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a noted improvement in the opportunities for students to partake in and lead assemblies. This includes each tutor group being involved in helping to plan Mass over the year.
- Students are acutely alert to the needs of others and seek justice for all within and beyond the college community. They respond positively to the college's strong focus on social justice, which is at the heart of this vibrant Catholic community. This manifests itself in the extensive range of fundraising activities chosen and supported by students, including those to aid refugees, asylum seekers and the homeless in Swindon and victims of human trafficking. These, alongside student chaplaincy led activities such as SVP and CAFOD and active involvement in the Lasallian India Project, are very effective in enabling students to put their faith in action.
- This strong sense of empathy and thirst/concern for justice is nurtured through a strong RE curriculum which encourages students to think ethically and engage in mature debate about 'real world' issues. Consequently, the extent to which they contribute to the 'common good' in the college and wider community is outstanding.
- The behaviour of students is exemplary, supported by the college's clear behaviour policy and zero tolerance of bullying and racism. This strong culture of respect for others is evident in all aspects of college life and particularly reinforced in RE, citizenship and the PSHE curriculum.
- Students benefit significantly from the college's strong, inclusive community, enriched by its ethnic diversity and high quality of relationships between staff and students. These are underpinned by its exceptionally strong pastoral provision which is embedded in Gospel values.
- Students' social development is, in turn, enhanced by the numerous opportunities they have to interact not only with other students, but also with outside agencies.
- Students embrace the many opportunities to share and celebrate their faith outside the classroom, such as retreat experiences at St Cassian's, participation in the national youth congress event 'Flame', participating in Education Mass at Clifton

Cathedral, attending diocesan walks, and involvement in drama experiences such as 'Born for This' during Holy Week.

- The high number attending the Sacrament of Reconciliation is testament to how students value and actively participate in this important aspect of the college's Catholic life.
- Since the last inspection, the structure of chaplaincy has changed from having a school chaplain to a chaplaincy team. The team consists of members of staff across the college and this has led to many students taking a more active part in contributing to the Catholic life of the College.
- Student leadership is strong across the college. Students are confident in leading fundraising, campaigning, acting as class representatives on the Student Council and as anti-bullying representatives, and participating in the Year 11 Young Leadership Programme.
- Students readily take on a range of positions of responsibility and leadership roles in the college's Catholic life. These include student organisations such as St Vincent De Paul which participates in local charitable activities, a CAFOD young leaders' club, a chaplaincy student group to help with school prayers and the liturgical life of the college. This enthusiastic response to taking on these roles is due, in no small part, to the encouragement and support of the staff chaplaincy team.
- Students value the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development which enables them to be happy and confident individuals. They are encouraged to develop a good understanding of loving relationships and sexual development within the context of a Christian understanding of love.

b) The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The college's mission statement is central, permeates every aspect of college life and is a clear expression of the wider mission of the church in education. The college motto 'Laus Deo Semper' is understood by students and is regularly revisited in lessons. It is evident in all aspects of the college, including the website, college documents and student uniforms.
- The college's environment reflects its mission and identity obvious signs of its Catholic character. In particular, the beautiful chapel, centrally located, and the vibrant displays in the RE classrooms and college entrance make a clear statement of its ethos to its members and to external visitors. Consideration should, however, be given to reinstating liturgical banners in the main thoroughfare (The Street) in order to celebrate further the strong Catholic identity of the college.
- The chaplaincy provision is exemplary in supporting and promoting the Catholic life of the school. It is effectively led by members of the RE department and is supported by colleagues from the administration team and other subject areas. Staff give generously of their time in volunteering to take students on spirituality retreats to Kintbury. Members of staff from history, curriculum support and maths, lead and support extra-curricular enrichments such as SVP, the CAFOD youth programme and

choir and drama enrichment. The latter involves large numbers of students in the preparation of Christmas and Easter services.

- The quality of care shown to all members of the community, both students and staff is outstanding. The pastoral team is highly skilled in providing support for vulnerable students. The college is also very attentive to the needs of staff and has good systems in place to support this.
- Staff are highly effective in promoting and exemplifying high standards of behaviour. The college's behaviour policy, based on clear and fair consequences and implemented by all, reflects Gospel values and makes a significant contribution to the college's harmonious community of mutual respect and forgiveness.
- The Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), Relationship and Sex Education (RSE), and citizenship programmes are effectively planned, mostly well taught by tutors, and reflect Catholic teachings and principles. Plans are in hand to review the overall provision for PSHE across the year groups. It is, however, strongly recommended that this should be extended to include a review of provision for RSE, especially at Key Stage 4 (KS4) and should be carefully monitored to ensure consistency of approach when taught as part of the PSHE dimension.

c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- Leaders and governors are committed to the Catholic life and character of the college and consider it a core leadership responsibility. They ensure that the college's Catholic mission is explicit in all college policies and the key documentation for parents, staff and students. Governors are regular visitors to the school, attending celebration assemblies where possible, and sometimes leading staff and students in prayer.
- Governors are involved in the college's evaluation of its Catholic life. For example, the previous experienced link governor and deacon (who retired from the role in July 2018) played an important part in working with the senior RE leader to support and review aspects of the school's Catholic life and RE, and in reporting to the governing body. His regular involvement with staff and students, in leading liturgies, helping with instructional Masses and running RSE workshops for Year 9 boys enabled him to have an excellent understanding of the college mission in education. There is currently a hiatus in relation to governors' involvement in this ongoing evaluation, as a replacement has not been found. It is imperative that appropriate support is put in place to enable the new link governor (when appointed) to continue with this role of providing challenge and support. Particular attention should be given to devising a more formal system for evaluating and reporting on the impact of actions taken to improve the Catholic and prayer life of the school.
- Staff are highly supportive of the college's Catholic life and value the opportunities to participate in the weekly reflections in the chapel, taking turns to lead and prepare these. They enrich provision by leading a wide range of student activities which promotes the college's Catholic and prayer life. Curriculum and professional

development (CPD) on the Catholic life of the school is an integral and regular feature of college life. The executive principal and governors lead sessions on these aspects during the staff induction/training day at the start of each academic year. Twilight sessions relating to the college's Catholic life, such as planning collective worship, are well attended and enjoyed by staff, often involving guest speakers. For example, the closing session for all staff on *The Year of Mission* and the start of *The Year of Prayer*, was led by Sr Judith Russi and highly acclaimed.

- The college works in partnership with home, parish and the wider community to endeavour to prepare all its members for 'a future in which they will be able to make a positive contribution and take up the challenges of their faith'. It has developed, and continues to develop, effective strategies for engaging with the majority of parents, including those who might traditionally find working with the college difficult. The communication between the pastoral team and parents is especially effective in this area, exemplifying the strong Catholic values of the college.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the whole curriculum contributes to students' spiritual, moral and vocational development by embarking in a yearly review, mapping provision across the curriculum against the cross-curricular mapping of *Catholic Social Teaching* key themes.
- Leaders and governors are actively engaging in diocesan policies and initiatives and are effective in promoting the Bishop's vision throughout the college. This is recognised in the college improvement plan which explicitly prioritises the Bishop's three-year plan of 'A Future full of Hope'. Governors' instigation of the *Year of Mission Award* to one student per year group for contributions to the Catholic life of the college is a testament to their commitment to implementing this vision.

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

- Overall, students make good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities across the key stages. The department is one of the top performing at GCSE and has maintained its strong achievement since the previous inspection. At GCSE, the progress of girls and the most able is particularly strong; the progress of low attainers is also strong (in line with the whole school). Student progress for those achieving 4+ is in line with national progress. However, the achievement of boys (especially at 5+) needs to be improved, as does the progress of middle ability and disadvantaged students. The department has already embarked upon effective strategies in relation to improving the progress of boys and disadvantaged students, but it should also give more focus to middle ability students.
- Overall, students enjoy their learning in RE because of the excellent relations engendered by their teachers and because of the engaging approaches to teaching in the subject. Students' impeccable conduct reflects the department's effective strategies to promote high standards of behaviour.
- Developing religious literacy for students continues to be given high priority by the RE department, with students provided with many opportunities to develop this. A clear focus is given to developing this aspect through a strong emphasis upon displaying key words within classrooms and on providing key word glossaries for students. Recent developments, as part of the whole school drive to improve literacy, have included the weekly testing of key RE words in Year 7, literacy for learning displays in all classrooms and more emphasis on marking for spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- The college's holistic approach to the teaching of RE, citizenship and PSHE, combined with rich opportunities provided to engage in activities to promote social justice, is highly effective in enabling students to think ethically and theologically and equips them to contribute to the *Common Good* in both the college and wider community.
- Students' attitudes to all aspects of their learning in RE are consistently positive and have a good impact on the progress they make. The excellent relations engendered by teachers creates a happy and purposeful environment in which students enjoy their learning and are confident, keen learners who want to find out more. This was evident in lessons observed during the inspection and discussions with students.

b) The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- Teaching is never less than consistently good and is sometimes outstanding. Teachers demonstrate a deep knowledge and understanding of RE, and those new to the teaching of the subject or new to Catholic education are given excellent support and guidance to enable them to be effective practitioners.

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- Teachers use questioning effectively and are quick to identify students' common misconceptions and act to ensure that they are corrected. The consistent use of clear learning objectives by all teachers provides students with a clear purpose to focus their learning efforts.
 - A strong emphasis is placed on enabling students to assess their own progress and achievement. Assessment for learning (AFL) is an integral part of lesson planning, as evidenced in the well planned departmental schemes of work, with peer and self-assessment being strongly promoted. However, the departmental policy that teachers use HTIs (how to improve and make progress comments) is not being consistently applied, especially for the middle ability and boys. In the best practice, gaps and misunderstandings were noted by teachers, using focused questions which students could immediately address. At other times, teachers' comments were vague and unspecific and which students struggled to address. Again, in line with departmental policy, more time could be set within lessons for the reading and completion of comments.
 - The RE department is highly effective in working collaboratively in designing and producing schemes of work and lesson plans, sharing different styles and techniques. Consequently, teachers employ a range of appropriate teaching strategies, including individual and collaborative work, which motivate and engage.
 - Teachers are becoming more confident in using the new assessment criteria and schemes of work in RE. The 'learning and developing together' approach adopted by the department has resulted in a well developed and consistent approach to planning at both key stages. If this, in turn, is applied consistently by all teachers, it will further enhance effective learning across the board and extend students' knowledge and understanding.
 - Teachers' analysis of data is effective in monitoring progress and in targeting underachieving students, with a particular focus on improving the performance of boys and disadvantaged students, using regular intervention sessions. However, more attention should be given to further improve the progress of middle ability students.

How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education (RE) curriculum meets the Bishops' Conference requirements and that the teaching of other faiths and traditions is effectively addressed.
- The senior leader for RE is an outstanding practitioner and role model for the department. She has a clear vision of what constitutes outstanding teaching and learning and a high level of expertise in securing this vision. She adopts a highly effective collaborative model of leadership, assigning departmental policies and areas for improvement according to strengths and interests. This is valued by her team and enhances their professional development.

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- The senior leader for RE works closely with the executive principal (an experienced RE practitioner) in monitoring the college's performance in RE through an annual departmental review, and as part of whole college reviews. In addition, she monitors teaching and learning throughout the year using student work scrutiny, student voice, observations and lesson drop-ins. Where areas for improvement are not met by staff, coaching and mentoring sessions are provided, along with time to observe other members of the department. Plans are in hand to develop the role of the assistant leader of RE to enable him to become more involved in the monitoring and evaluation process.
 - Governors' involvement in the evaluation of RE provision has, until recently, been led by the RE/Catholic life governor. He has worked effectively with the senior lead for RE to engage in annually reviewing schemes of work, participating in reviews of the college's Catholic life and RE, and in reporting to the governing body.

The Prayer Life of the School

Grade 2

a) How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's prayer life

- Every pupil, regardless of their faith background, feels welcome to participate fully in the school's prayer life. The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development and plays an important part in supporting their learning in RE and other areas. Students' well-developed respect for those of other faiths is a strong feature of college life.
- Students value and participate in the many opportunities to develop their prayer life, through the well-planned whole school spiritual reflections and prayer themes developed for tutor worship, weekly year group assemblies and prayer at the start of each lesson. These themes are regularly updated in line with the liturgical calendar and with key foci, such as Holocaust memorial and anti-bullying week. They encourage students to develop a greater understanding of the purpose, relevance and importance of prayer in daily life.
- Student involvement in preparing and leading worship has improved since the last inspection and remains an ongoing focus for the college. The inadvertent change in the structure of chaplaincy (from having a school lay chaplain to a chaplaincy team) has been instrumental in leading to an increase in the numbers of students involved in leading prayer. For example, in 2018 sixty members of the chaplaincy student team, along with the year 10 youth CAFOD team, were involved in leading assemblies and preparing presentations for diocesan days. The enrichment drama club has over 50 members who plan, prepare and lead Christmas and Easter services, which results in a religious performance and collective worship for all members of the college.
- There are regular opportunities to participate in Mass as part of the whole school, tutor and year groups. Students particularly value their tutor group Mass which they plan together in the chapel with a priest and a member of the chaplaincy team. Students respond positively through volunteering to read, to present gifts at the offertory and to act as altar servers.
- Students, have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts, including the patronal feast day.

b) The quality of the prayer life provided by the school

- Prayer is central to the life of the college for all students, whatever their faith background, and is the core of every college celebration. Praying together is an integral and daily experience for all students and staff and is given a high priority in terms of planning and resourcing.
- The college ensures that the themes chosen for worship reflect a good understanding of the liturgical seasons and the Catholic character of the college.

This is supported and embedded through daily prayer in tutor groups and assemblies led by senior leadership team (SLT) and in RE. However, the consistency and quality of experience of prayer in tutor periods is variable and is an area for further improvement. At times, it is perfunctory and overly dependent on traditional forms of prayer. Consideration should be given to developing tutors' skills in encouraging students' leadership and understanding of the wide variety of methods and styles of prayer.

- Pupils' prayer life is enriched through a range of prayer opportunities outside the classroom, such as retreat experiences at St Cassian's, participation in the national youth congress event 'Flame', participating in Education Mass at Clifton Cathedral, attending diocesan walks with Bishop Declan and involvement in drama experiences such as 'Born for This' during Holy Week.
- There are well planned opportunities for students to prepare and participate in liturgies and assemblies throughout the period of Advent and Lent, e.g. Ash Wednesday, Easter and Christmas services. Students are invited to reconcile in a symbolic way during this time and lead the weekly *Stations of the Cross* at lunchtime during Lent.
- The student chaplaincy team has proved effective in supporting the prayer life of the college and complements the strong pastoral and spiritual ethos of the college. For example, they have planned, organised and led tutor sessions on the 'Year of Mercy', resulting in a whole-college banner to commemorate the year. They have also led assemblies explaining how students reflect and participate in Jesus' teaching 'to love your neighbour as yourself' through social justice activities, the CAFOD youth team and SVP.
- Links between school and its parishes remain exceptionally strong, building on a strong tradition. Most of college's adult chaplaincy and RE team are catechists in the local parishes and are involved in First Holy Communion, children's liturgies and Confirmation programmes in Swindon. This is greatly valued by the local parishes. Many students are actively involved in their parishes as altar servers, readers and Eucharistic Ministers.

c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the prayer life of the school

- Members of the senior leadership team are confident in delivering quality prayer and worship through the daily year group assemblies they lead. This was aptly demonstrated in a Year 10 assembly led by the executive principal which skilfully weaved the theme of Advent together with the college's response to the 'Year of Mission', school motto and students' charitable work, within a framework of prayer and reflection led by students.
- Leaders are committed to developing good practice as 'leaders of prayer', benefiting, over the years, from the support and guidance of the RE/Catholic life governor. He, in collaboration with members of the staff chaplaincy team, has

played an important part in supporting and developing staff's understanding of liturgy and worship.

- Staff are effectively inducted into the Catholic life of the college and are provided with appropriate resources to assist them in leading prayer in lessons and tutor times. However, given the inconsistency and quality of experience of prayer in tutor groups noted in the previous section, it is important that training in planning prayer and collective worship should remain an ongoing focus.
- Professional development for leaders and staff on prayer takes place annually through instructional Mass, staff training day on the spiritual life of the college, and guest speakers. The senior leader for RE and members of the staff chaplaincy team regularly attend relevant diocesan training yearly to promote this aspect.
- Whole college reviews record prayer led by staff and students at the beginning of each lesson. Student feedback from college questionnaires indicate that they consider that the provision of prayer at the college is good.
- Until recently, governors' involvement in evaluating the provision for the college's prayer life (as with its Catholic life and RE) has been through the aegis of the experienced link governor, working closely with the senior RE leader in learning walks and reviews in order to report to the governing body. As with the monitoring and evaluation of RE and Catholic life, it is important that appropriate support is put in place to enable the new link governor (when appointed) to continue with this role of providing challenge and support. The monitoring and evaluation process could be further strengthened by devising a more formal system for evaluating and reporting on the impact of actions taken to improve the prayer life of the school.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 29 parental questionnaires received. They were extremely positive about the school and their children's education. Some parents considered that they did not receive sufficient information about what is taught in RSE. Some typical responses in relation to why they chose St Joseph's for their child/children included:

'For religious education and spiritual growth'

'Mixed pupil profile, well mannered, polite students'

'I am a Catholic and want best Catholic education for my child'

'Because it provides a good education, comprehensive religious knowledge'

'Good ethos of behaviour and attitudes to learning'

'Good teaching staff – child who has grown in independence and responsibility'

'Teachers teach properly and support pupils with study'

'Conduct and rigour'

'Because of the college's high standards'

'The strong Catholic ethos, Gospel values, strong academic and spiritual education'