

DIOCESE OF LEEDS DBI



SECTION 48 REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Pontefract Road
Castleford
WF10 4JB

School URN	108261
Chair of Governors	Rev Sean Durcan
Headteacher	Mr Kieron Flood
RE Subject Leader	Mr Kieron Flood
Dates of Inspection	8 th & 9 th July 2009
Section 48 Inspectors	Linda Brown & Janet Hutton

INTRODUCTION

The Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Castleford was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Leeds Diocesan Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Bishop of Leeds.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is a Voluntary Aided Catholic Primary School which attracts pupils from a wide area beyond its catchment, which reflects the popularity of the school and the high regard the wider community has for the school. There are 205 children on roll, one class per year group, with the school currently being over-subscribed. Following Diocesan review, the school now serves the parish of St Joseph's, Castleford, with 54% of pupils coming from the lowest categories of deprivation. Pupils from the school's immediate catchment are well below the English average in terms of the percentage of adults moving onto higher education and well below average for the percentage of high social class households. The percentage of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Statements is well above the LA and national average and the percentage of minority ethnic children has continued to increase over the last 3 years and at 11.6% is well above the LA average. In addition, the percentage of children with EAL has increased over the past 2 years and at 5.8% is above the LA average, and the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals has increased over the past 3 years but is still lower than the LA and national averages. The school has a number of children who are not Catholic or Christian, although families that attend the school show real commitment and support of the school's faith dimension. There are strong links with the parish which include integrated curriculum activities led by the parish and diocesan priests.

Community cohesion at St Joseph's is outstanding. The school is a member of the Wakefield Catholic Schools Partnership and has excellent links with St Wilfred's pyramid of schools, Burntwood School via a linking project and an international link with Memusi School in Africa. Children's attitudes and behaviour are a strength of the school and there have been no exclusions in the last seven years, with attendance in 2008 (96.4%) being well above LA and national averages. Through school intervention programmes, some families are working with Social Services and/or Catholic Care workers to support pupils and their families in improving access to learning.

The school has achieved HealthySchools status, Sports Active Mark, Eco Schools Silver Aware, Artsmark, International Schools Foundation Aware, Basic Skills Quality Mark (fourth renewal) and is working towards Investors in Pupils. St Joseph's is fully extended and meets the core offer for an extended school enabling pupils and families from across the Castleford pyramid to access safe and quality care and support across the core offer of provision.

The aims and values of the school emphasize the strong partnership between parents, carers, pupils, staff, parish and the wider community. The school mission includes the phrase "Learning to love, loving to learn through Christ", which encapsulates this.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

The overall effectiveness of the provision for the Catholic life of the school, of curriculum RE, and the school's main strengths and areas for development.

The provision of Catholic education at St Joseph's is outstanding. The continued successful growth and development of a community that is truly "Learning to love, loving to learn through Christ", is testimony to the strong focus on the school's Catholic mission, on raising standards and promoting the personal development of pupils by all those who hold leadership positions. This living mission is built on the solid foundations of effective, secure and lasting relationships shared among governors, staff, parents, pupils and parishioners. Each and every member of the school community is valued highly.

The overall response of the pupils is outstanding. All pupils fully understand, subscribe to and actively promote the mission of the school. They thrive as a result of the teaching of Religious Education (RE), enjoy their lessons, and make very good progress. The highly effective teaching in RE, together with the outstanding provision of the broader curriculum including Circle Time and PSHCE, contributes enormously to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils which is a significant strength of the school.

Parents are truly regarded as 'partners in education'. They are consulted on all major matters and their views are given serious consideration by the school. School surveys are testimony to this by the overwhelming majority of parents who express clear satisfaction with all aspects of school life, pleasure with the progress their children make in RE and value the close co-operation between school and parish. They are particularly impressed with the warm welcome received by all and the levels of communication and information sent out by the headteacher informing them of the relevance and importance of the different celebrations within the liturgical year. As one parent commented, "Coming into St Joseph's is like wrapping yourself in a comfortable blanket, where you feel loved and safe."

The effectiveness of any steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection

All key areas since the last inspection have been successfully addressed. The head teacher, governors and staff have undertaken considerable development regarding assessment in RE in line with Diocesan developments. Manageable, effective systems for assessment in RE are in place, allowing all staff to track pupils, ensuring that all pupils are provided with the opportunity to reach their full potential and make better than expected progress.

Considerable training has been invested in AfL strategies in all subjects including RE as well as continued monitoring processes to support CPD and to improve the quality of teaching and learning in RE. This is now judged to be outstanding and clearly gives challenge to the more able pupils, whilst continuing to support all vulnerable groups of pupils.

Circle Time and ethos statements are embedded into the life of the school and have a positive impact on pupils' learning and understanding of their roles and responsibilities within school and the wider community.

The Mission review has allowed governors, staff, parents and children the opportunity to fully participate in and reflect on school's ethos and purpose.

The capacity to make further improvements

Under the excellent leadership that exists at St Joseph's the school's capacity to improve is outstanding. Inclusion of all learners is a central goal based on its belief that all are created in the image of God, and this is effectively proved throughout school. The school enjoys excellent relationships with parents, parish, local and global communities and external agencies and was judged by OFSTED to have outstanding Community Cohesion which reinforces the high standards of care, guidance and support through which the whole community flourishes.

Leadership focuses on the school's Catholic mission, on raising standards and promoting personal development of learners which has impacted upon standards raising across the board and challenging targets being met and exceeded. There is a shared sense of mission amongst staff who all want the best for the children and the school.

The outstanding leadership and management team are totally committed as they strive towards further improving what is an already an outstanding school. The governors are very effective in pursuing this by not allowing themselves to become complacent. The school has excellent self-evaluation systems, enhanced by the determination of the governors. In the light of these factors the school clearly has the capacity to improve even further

What steps need to be taken in order to further improve the provision of Catholic education?

To continue to develop the Assessment procedures that are already well established within the school, with particular reference to fully integrating RE assessment data within the whole school tracking system and the introduction of pupil target setting in RE to further improve the already high quality of teaching and learning.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

How effective are Leadership and Management in developing the Catholic life of the school?

Leadership and management at St Joseph's is outstanding. Leaders at all levels have a strong sense of the educational mission of the Church and the role of the school in expressing it. The Parish Priest is actively involved in the work of the school and chaplaincy provision is excellent. The Headteacher has a clear vision for his school, which is shared and lived out throughout the whole school and parish community. His obvious passion for his role, combined with a deep sense of spirituality, is the dynamic driving force for the whole school community, inspiring and energising all those with whom he comes into contact. Inclusion of all pupils is a central goal based on the belief that all are created in the image of God and St Joseph's is a shining example of this. Community Cohesion is outstanding at St Joseph's, with all children aware of their role in their local, national and global communities. Governance is outstanding. All members of the Governing Body fulfil their role in relation to the school's Catholic foundation, through the implementation of highly efficient and effective systems for monitoring and evaluating the Catholic life of the school. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and pupils fully understand their contribution to the school and broader community.

Very good links exist with parents, parish and external agencies to reinforce the high standard of care, guidance and support the school provides to ensure its pupils' safety and general well-being. Parents speak of a "genuine welcome" and of the "fantastic stuff they do here!" They feel listened to and supported by all staff within the school. The result is that the pupils flourish and commit themselves to the school's mission.

Development needs are accurately identified and tackled energetically. The impact of leadership and management can be seen in the good progress made by the pupils, and in their involvement in the many and varied Acts of Worship and liturgical celebrations.

The Parish Priest is very proud of the school, parish and church community. He works extremely hard to promote and maintain excellent relationships with all members of the partnership, particularly with the headteacher, whom he holds in high esteem. The governors have a clear vision for the school and as a critical friend are not afraid to question what goes on in school. The School is very fortunate to have such a supportive Parish Priest, who is also the Chair of Governors, and a headteacher who is very protective of the Catholic ethos of the school and who strongly influences community cohesion by living out the Christian values of his faith.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How good is the quality of Collective Worship?

Collective Worship at St Joseph's is outstanding. Pupils are very confident in preparing, leading and participating in vibrant acts of Collective Worship. Acts of Worship engage pupils' interest and inspire deep thought and reflective responses in both class based and whole school worship. Pupils are keen to participate in worship and their behaviour is reverent and respectful at all times, from the youngest pupils to the oldest. Throughout all liturgies there is a calm, spiritual atmosphere and creative use is made of music and Scripture to successfully develop the Catholic life of the school, as particularly evidenced in the wonderfully moving whole school worship, led by the headteacher. Excellent links are made between RE lessons and collective worship, as particularly evidenced in a Year 2 liturgy.

The liturgical life of the school is a central focus, as it promotes the sense of Mission, with a wide range of experiences through the Gospels, Scriptures and Bible Stories, with an emphasis on the use of the "Come and See", Ethos Statements and Cafod materials.

Pupils join in with the parish community in church and parents and families are regularly invited to share in a range of collective worship in school. Parents comment extremely positively on the quality and frequency of the worship to which they are invited and are always made to feel welcome. The Parish Priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school. He knows the adults and children very well and plays an important role in their spiritual and pastoral care and development.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RE

How well do pupils achieve in RE?

Pupil attainment on entry is below national standards. Taking the low starting points and the diverse nature of the school community into consideration the standards achieved by all pupils at St. Joseph's is outstanding. Pupils make very good progress in RE, particularly the higher attaining pupils and the more vulnerable pupils who have special educational needs. This is lived out through a strong commitment to inclusion and it is demonstrated by teachers and support staff who have a good understanding of the needs of the pupils and their role in meeting them. Pupils describe teaching as interesting and that the teachers and all other adults help them to learn and as a consequence they are motivated to respond positively. Pupils listen attentively and behave respectfully and are able to work well with others. All staff have high expectations of pupils by challenging their capabilities. Consequently, pupils make very good progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. The pupils are able to discuss religious beliefs, explain the impact of religion on the way they behave, ask questions relevant to topics being discussed and display a very good understanding of their faith. All pupils show outstanding attitudes towards their work, take a great deal of pride in it and enjoy what they are doing. They demonstrate a good level of faith commitment lived out through their daily lives.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN RE

How effective are Teaching and learning in RE?

The quality of teaching and learning in RE at St. Joseph's on the whole is outstanding with no teaching less than good. This is confirmed through effective monitoring procedures by the Headteacher. All of the lessons observed during the inspection gave pupils the opportunity for

prayer and reflection which was poignantly demonstrated as the Foundation Stage children released a net of butterflies at the end of a most vibrant reflection to conclude a lesson telling the story of King David. Pupils commented on the wide and varied range of teaching strategies and resources used in lessons by their teachers in order to encourage them to think about how they can live out the gospel values in their everyday lives. All pupils are extremely articulate, are highly motivated and obviously clearly enjoy their lessons. Work is carefully differentiated to suit the needs of all pupils to ensure they meet the needs of all learners. Through their broad skills base, commitment and dedication, the highly skilled support staff work hard to encourage and ensure pupils achieve their learning objectives. "Global Week" activities permeated the RE curriculum as pupils were made aware of how different cultures and the needs of others can have an adverse effect on the environment and how they, as young people can influence their attitudes and actions. Teachers displayed high levels of knowledge of the faith and used excellent cross-curricular links to engage pupils in the very clearly identified learning objectives. This was particularly well presented through hot seating, interviewing visitors and role play.

The New Levels of Attainment have been almost fully implemented in the rigorous assessment and tracking system for R.E. It is evident that R.E. is the core subject in this school. Comprehensive portfolios of moderated pupils work are in place, supporting the assessment process and the R.E. Co-ordinator has set up exemplary monitoring and evaluation system. The school regularly informs parents about their children's learning in RE as reported in a very comprehensive RE Parent survey. Marking of pupils work is consistent and highly effective throughout the school. Pupils are in the process of being given individual targets in order to further improve and enhance their work. This is an area the school has identified for development.

How well does the RE curriculum meet the needs and interests of pupils?

R.E. curricular provision is outstanding with a balanced delivery of the Diocesan R.E. programme which enables pupils to learn about other faiths through quality teaching experiences enhanced through visits and visitors to school. Music, literacy, drama and ICT are used effectively to develop knowledge and understanding of other cultures. A partnership has recently been established with a school in Memusi and by using video conferencing facilities pupils are given the opportunity to ask questions to find out about the lifestyles of those living within the communities of Africa. Children learn about growing up, the importance of family life, relationships and responsibilities and citizenship, developing into caring and responsible young people. The teaching of the Catholic faith is fundamental and ensures that the children use the examples of the Gospels to model their way of life. Observed teaching highlights the importance which all teachers attach to developing reading, writing, speaking and ICT skills in their R.E. lessons.

The Here I Am Statements of Belief are displayed throughout the school and incorporated into Circle Time which is used effectively to enrich spiritual and moral development. Pupils focus on relationships with their peers, communities to which they belong and the global community through Global Week. St. Joseph's is at the hub of the local community and is held in exceptionally high esteem by everyone who comes into contact with the school. The headteacher is the "face of St. Joseph's" and has been instrumental in creating such caring and thoughtful children by providing them with many opportunities to interact with people less fortunate in the wider society. Children are regular visitors within the locality to entertain and offer harvest time gifts to the elderly. Pupils take part in a wide range of fund-raising activities throughout the school year, making them aware of their role as global citizens. All pupils have access to the RE curriculum by the school stating that it believes that inclusion is a shared vision, where dialogue and collaboration are encouraged, respect for all is engendered and all show concern for the well-being of others, locally, nationally and internationally.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF RE

How effective are Leadership and Management in raising achievement and supporting all pupils in RE?

The leadership and management of R.E. is outstanding and is a significant strength of the school. The subject leader, who is also the headteacher, has a strong sense of mission which inspires and

drives the school to constantly improve and move forward. RE is centrally woven into the school development plan. Resources are purchased carefully and utilised effectively to enhance the provision in R.E.

The headteacher, governors, and all staff have a shared vision and sense of mission which is evident in all aspects of school life. Leaders and Managers at all levels share a cohesive evangelical vision based on the teaching of the Gospel and through their own example, tireless undertaking and commitment, set a clear direction for the whole community, promoting the highest quality care and education.

Excellent links are in place with parents and the wider community. The parents cannot speak highly enough of the school and the support it gives them to be effective partners in their children's education and faith journeys

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS SUMMARY

ASPECT	GRADE	DESCRIPTOR
OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS	1	Outstanding
THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL		
How effective are Leadership and Management in developing the Catholic life of the school?	1	Outstanding
How good is the quality of Collective Worship?	1	Outstanding
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION		
How well do pupils achieve in RE?	1	Outstanding
How effective are Teaching and learning in RE?	1	Outstanding
How well does the RE curriculum meet the needs and interests of pupils?	1	Outstanding
How effective are Leadership and Management in raising achievement and supporting all pupils in RE?	1	Outstanding