

DIOCESE OF LEEDS



DIOCESAN BOARD FOR INSPECTIONS

**SECTION 48
FINAL REPORT**

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Pontefract Road, Castleford, WF10 4JB

School URN

108261

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Chair of Governors

Mrs. Bev Sice

Acting Headteacher

Mrs. Annie McNally

RE Subject Leaders

Mr. Matthew Harris & Mrs. Annie
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Date of Inspection

5th – 6th December 2011

Section 48 Inspector

Mrs. Marie McClelland

INTRODUCTION

The Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School 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. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors (2010).

The inspector attended a whole school and a class-based Collective Worship (CW) session, observed five Religious Education (RE) lessons, visited every classroom in the school to discuss and view samples of RE work in every year group. Discussions with staff, parents, pupils, Parish Priest and Governors were held over two days. A range of evidence was seen including the RE subject leader's file, planning and assessment files, monitoring and evaluation records, the report of the *School Improvement Partner*, head teacher's report, the *School Development Plan*, minutes of Wakefield Schools Partnership Committee, several written communications to and from parents, pupil questionnaires, and four large albums of annotated photographic evidence of special projects and themed work since the last inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Joseph's is a popular and oversubscribed Voluntary Aided school serving the Catholic parish of St Joseph in Castleford. There are 210 pupils on roll, one class per year group, and just over half of the pupil population are baptised Catholics. Pupil mobility is low. Numbers eligible for free school meals are below the national average. The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs (SEN) register is broadly similar to the national average.

Some teaching staff changes have occurred since the last inspection as well as changes in leadership roles. The current Acting Headteacher was appointed in April 2011, the Acting Deputy Headteacher in June 2011 and the new RE subject leader in September 2011. Extensive building works indoors have been completed recently as well as improvements to outdoor provision in the Foundation Stage, in the school garden and in the outdoor-teaching area.

The school has achieved the following national standards awards: *Healthy Schools*, Basic Skills Quality Mark 4, *Activemark*, Eco Silver, *Food for Life: Bronze*, International Schools Bronze, and *Artsmark Silver*. At the time of inspection, St Joseph's was long listed as a finalist in the national *Church School of the Year Award 2011-12*.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection Grades: 1 is Outstanding, 2 is Good, 3 is Satisfactory, 4 is Inadequate

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

1

This is a summative judgement based on the 2 judgements below: Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils, provision for Catholic education (includes effectiveness of leaders and managers) and capacity for sustained improvement.

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS, PROVISION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

1

CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT

1

Main findings

St Joseph's is an outstanding school guided by its mission statement 'Learning to love, loving to learn through Christ'. It is a welcoming place where children are loved and respected and where the enjoyment of learning is almost tangible. The very strong links between home, school and parish provide a safe and caring scaffold for pupils that is reflected in their confident sense of belonging and in their openness to a general sense of faith-sharing. The Catholic life of the school is rich and varied and contributes to the spiritual development of pupils. Staff work well as a team to share ideas and expertise in planning and delivering exciting lessons in RE and this helps towards a continuity of standards. Classrooms and shared resource areas are well organised and labelled thus contributing to an orderly and pleasant environment that is appreciated and respected by pupils. Behaviour is excellent throughout the school and pupils show considerable kindness towards each other.

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is mainly outstanding with many other lessons showing good or outstanding features. As a consequence, pupil progress is good and attainment is high. All staff have high expectations and the excellent assessment and monitoring systems help to identify specific areas for improvement. The school sets itself challenging targets for on-going raising of attainment in RE and it can demonstrate that end of KS results in RE are comparable with results in other subjects. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good and this contributes to the overall enjoyment of learning. The capacity for sustained improvement is secure because of the excellent self-evaluation systems, the commitment and enthusiasm of all staff, the professional vision and personal contribution to date of the Acting Headteacher, and the effectiveness of the governing body.

WHAT THE SCHOOL NEEDS TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

School leaders have already correctly identified the following priorities for improvement

- Raise end of KS2 attainment in RE towards level 5 by targeting higher attainment in RE in specific year groups to match similar standards in Writing and Reading.
- Continue the excellent support for professional and personal development in RE for all staff.

In view of the excellent Christian ethos of this school, staff should also:

- Explore additional/creative ways of helping all pupils to nurture/deepen personal spirituality.

PUPILS

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

1

It is evident from pupils' general self-esteem, endemic good behaviour and excellent demeanour that St Joseph's is an outstanding school where pupils can *achieve and enjoy* their learning. Commenting on the school's 'wonderful community spirit', a parent wrote, 'It allows my son to feel comfortable and welcome.'

The building is beautifully appointed and lovingly decorated by staff to remind pupils that everything in here is a celebration of learning because enjoyment of learning is a sign of our love for Christ. Within minutes of designing angel figures, for instance, a Y1 pupil could point with pride to his particular model already on a wall display. Corridors, display areas and classroom walls throughout the school provide an eclectic gallery of pupil progress with very obvious impact on the way pupils take pride in their work and constantly reveal new talents. Recognition of special effort spills into the weekly *Newsletter* to parents, too, like the sample of Y6 poetic answers to 'Where is God?' or the photographs and citation for winners of the *Good Shepherd Trophy* each week.

The RE learning needs of all pupils, including those on the SEN Register, are skillfully identified by year-on-year systematic tracking records, and are supported and provided for by an excellent team of teachers and teaching assistants. Standards of attainment in RE are at least high in all key stages, there are no unsatisfactory areas and high expectations are the norm. Pupils use a range of religious vocabulary appropriately and spontaneously and, as a result, can articulate different levels of spiritual and ethical thinking. KS2 pupils, for instance, explained that the benefits of regular CW and RE lessons were '*knowing the Holy Spirit is guiding us*', that he helps us '*get through tough problems*' and reminds us '*to calm down and think, say, when things happen on the playground*'. They have a wide repertoire of hymns, prayers and gestures enabling them to plan and engage confidently and reverently in a variety of liturgical events. In Foundation Stage (FS), following a singing of two verses of 'Silent Night' a very young pupil made a plea for silence because '*I'm thinking. I'm speaking to Jesus on my own.*'

Key displays contribute to an osmotic community spirit e.g. '*We are all neighbours under one sky*' or '*God's fingerprint is on each one of us*'. A recent newcomer to the school spoke about how quickly one could settle in to St Joseph's and about his particular pride at having to wear a school-tie! Welcoming and sustaining an on-going sense of belonging for

all pupils is a particular strength of the school. Regular communications with parents especially by the Text Messaging Service, the weekly Newsletter and the 'Wednesday Word' provide a ring of adult care, connection and interest around pupils. Describing how the St Joseph's family makes children '*entirely happy and secure*', one parent wrote, '*It becomes the expected way to treat each other*'.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	1
Taking into account:	
• the quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
• the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
• pupils' attainment in Religious Education	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.	1

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic education.

1

A range of firmly embedded teaching styles and activities is used to outstanding effect to motivate interest, to sustain concentration and to help pupils assimilate their new learning. Teachers' subject knowledge ensures that high expectations of pupil capabilities are uppermost at the planning stages of all lessons. The school's claim to a 'skills based curriculum' was evidenced throughout. *Hot-seating* techniques have been so well refined that all age groups readily engage in formulating opinions and asking questions to elicit information. Thus, a Y1 *Shepherd* mused with confidence, "Well I was quite scared because I never knew angels existed before," while a Y4 *Joseph* writing to *Zachariah*, announcing his marriage, told him, 'I'm your brother-in-law now,' and asked, 'What's it like being a priest?' Y3 pupils questioned *Mary* about her reactions to the visit of the *Wise Men* and wondered if she had felt even slightly embarrassed about the poverty of the stable before such eminently rich strangers.

The current systems for assessment and monitoring of standards in RE are outstanding. The Acting Headteacher has a very clear and confident grasp of how critical self-review guards against complacency and priorities for continuous improvement in RE continue to be identified and targeted. She has worked closely with the new RE subject leader empowering him to embrace the role with confidence. The latter is an excellent role model not just because of his outstanding teaching skills and secure subject knowledge but also because of his general enthusiasm and his commitment to RE and spiritual development. RE is materially very well resourced especially with the new 'The Way the Truth and The Life' (WTL) scheme; but the greatest resource is the dedication and enthusiasm of all staff, their discerning and skilful use of ICT and their readiness for faith sharing with pupils and with each other. The Acting Headteacher leads by example in this respect.

The RE curriculum fulfills diocesan requirements. It is organised around the life of Christ and the teaching of his Church. School, home and parish links are very strong not least because of the pro-active involvement of the Parish Priest (PP), and the commitment of the Acting Headteacher to engage with parents as co-educators. Preparation for first

sacraments is thorough and all pupils are known by name to the PP. The Prayer Corner in school is a much-visited space for quiet reflection and the Community Prayer Book is a regular depository for prayer requests. The revised SRE programme, *'In The Beginning'*, is to be reviewed in the Spring Term by governors and parents.

Collective Worship at the school is outstanding because it enriches pupils' understanding and observation of liturgical seasons and feasts and is a key factor in age-appropriate spiritual formation. Parents talk of an ethos of 'spine-tingling togetherness' at such occasions, a phrase that could also be applied to the whole school CW led by the Acting Head on the first day of inspection. On the second day, a Y5 class-based CW led by three pupils replicated, in miniature, the same ethos of reverence and respect appropriate for 'a family at prayer'. Mass is central to the life of the school and parents and parishioners attest to the impressive engagement of all pupils as they join in the singing and prayers, or take the lead with reading or with liturgical dance. St Joseph's is a very prayerful school and staff are well aware of the benefits of supporting and nurturing that prayer life in a variety of ways.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching in Religious Education.	1
The use of assessment to support learning in Religious Education.	1
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs.	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.	1

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School.

1

St Joseph's is a happy and confident school where all adults are aware of being 'a necessary piece of the jigsaw' that is the picture of its overall success. There is a strong learning culture with good support for staff wishing to engage in personal as well as professional study programmes. Those attending the *Catholic Foundation Stones* and the *Parent Partnership* courses, for instance, identified singular benefits for their work with pupils in school. *Parent Partnership* (an accredited course) is to be offered to parents in the Spring Term. Since September, there has been focused inset on developing spirituality, on safeguarding the mission of the Catholic school and on ways of developing learning outside the classroom. Pro-active involvement with the Wakefield Partnership of Catholic Schools provides a wealth of opportunities for enriching Catholic life experiences for all pupils enabling them to work with other schools and agencies and in other locations. Ideas for improving the provision for RE are gathered from surveys of pupils and parents and from networking with staff in partnership schools. A portfolio of standardised work at each level in RE serves as a valuable reference tool. Monitoring records of CW, of classroom displays, of pupil workbooks and of RE lesson observations indicate good levels of teamwork and professional dialogue. The Governing Body has considerable professional expertise and long-term involvement with the school thus enabling it to fulfil its statutory and canonical responsibilities. Working through a purposeful committee system and regular personal contact with classes and with the Acting Head and staff, governors are very well equipped to be the critical friend who can support and challenge in a spirit of trust and openness.

The school has an extensive record of involvement in neighbourhood activities, inter-school events, residential visits, visiting speakers and theatre groups, international thematic weeks, inter-faith links, and myriad fund-raising events to support charities at home and abroad. A KS2 pupil recalled her encounter, via video-conferencing, with the headteacher and some pupils of a school in Africa that had been helped with funds from St Joseph's; another pupil organised a sponsored event to buy 80 pigs for a third world community and the school is currently engaged in filling a 40ft container with used furniture to be shipped to an Aids Orphanage School in Zambia. There is a firm commitment to the annual CAFOD international projects. Pen-pal links with a multi-cultural school in Birmingham were being arranged at the time of inspection. At the time of inspection, St Joseph's was long listed as a finalist in the *Church School of the Year Awards 2011-12*, a national project that recognizes contribution to '*inspiring citizens and transforming communities*'.

These are the grades for leadership and management

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.	1
How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.	1
The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met.	1
How well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and pupil well-being.	1
How effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion.	1