

DIOCESE OF LEEDS DBI



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
WETHERBY

School URN

108020

Chair of Governors

Alma Hewison

Headteacher

Dominic Williams

RE Subject Leader

Dominic Williams

Date of Inspection

30th April & 1st May 2009

Section 48 Inspector

Mark Brennan

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.

Description of the school

St. Joseph's is an average sized voluntary aided Catholic primary school, which serves the parish of St Joseph's Wetherby and the surrounding villages.

The school has a published admission number of 30 and there are 225 pupils on roll of whom 93% are Catholic and 7% are of other Christian denominations.

The vast majority of the pupils are from socio-economic backgrounds that are more favourable than the average nationally, with only one pupil in receipt of free school meals. The population is stable and there is very little mobility of pupils. Almost all pupils are white British. The small number of pupils from other ethnic groups is not at the early stage of learning English as an additional language.

Data for the year 2009 indicates that pupils identified, as having special educational needs is 6.6%, there are no pupils with statements; this is well below the national average. The school has in recent times, under the newly appointed SEN Coordinator, improved its systems for identifying children with Special Educational Needs.

Whilst the majority of children enter Foundation Stage with average or above attainment there is a minority of children below national expectations. The Nursery, previously full-time, became economically unsustainable and now provides 15 hours educational provision per week (3 hours each morning).

There are 8 single age classes, 2 in Foundation Stage, 2 in KS1 and 4 in KS2. There are 9 teachers, 5 of whom possess the CCRS.

The school belongs to the ELMET partnership of schools, which provides educational, sporting and financial benefits to the member schools. The school is a feeder school for St. John Fisher Catholic High School in Harrogate, a specialist Arts College.

The school appointed a new Headteacher in September 2007 to replace the longstanding Head teacher who had retired. Governors created 2 assistant Headteacher posts to replace the Deputy Headteacher who retired in January 2007. The Governing Body is made up of new and experienced governors who offer the school a wide range of expertise.

The school has National Healthy Schools Status, FA Charter Mark and the Active Schools Mark. The school is aiming to achieve the ICT Charter Mark within the next few years.

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.

Thanks to the dedication and commitment of the headteacher, staff and governors, the overall effectiveness of St Joseph's Catholic Primary school is consistently good, with some outstanding elements deserving praise, such as the behaviour of the pupils, their attainment levels in RE, their response to prayer and worship and their spiritual and moral development. St Joseph's is a happy, safe and close knit school, where children are valued and nurtured from the moment they enter in the Nursery, to the day they leave and go to high school 8 years later.

The relatively recent changes in the leadership team and in the governing body have brought a period of review and re-focus within the school and towards the community it serves. This has resulted in a clear vision and development plan which will be compounded further in Autumn 2009 as all stakeholders review the school's mission statement. A number of initiatives, new approaches and new systems have been put in place in the last year, and the fruits of these have begun to emerge. The school is aware that it needs to continue to open itself to the wider community, to enhance RE assessment and to seek more ways of using ICT in RE.

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

The school has made good progress on encouraging and supporting a shared responsibility among the staff and pupils in leading Collective Worship and Liturgies. All staff and some older pupils now take on this responsibility confidently and enthusiastically.

A good rate of progress has been made by the headteacher and SLT in reviewing the systems used to monitor and assess RE. The headteacher, as RE coordinator is observing lessons, conducting work scrutiny and ensuring that new diocesan assessment strategies are in place. The school is aware that some further work needs to be done in this area.

ICT was an issue for the last inspection and good development has taken place in this area under the headteacher's enthusiastic supervision. This is especially the case in all KS2 classes. The school is keen to continue to improve the use of ICT in RE and the curriculum generally as financial resources allow.

Proactive work has been done on establishing effective communication, wider sporting and other extra-curricular opportunities, increased parish partnership, renewed teaching and learning resources for RE and a tangible sense of openness and welcome.

The capacity to make further improvements

The Governors have confidence in the enthusiasm, skills, experience and vision of the headteacher and commitment of the staff. The school has strong organisational capacity to successfully effect ongoing development and improvement

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

- Ø Continue to improve the procedures in place for assessment in RE including the monitoring of attainment by governors.
- Ø Further improve the work already being undertaken to enhance pupils' understanding of other world faiths and social cohesion at a local and wider community level.
- Ø Continue to develop the use of ICT in RE.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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

The leadership and management of St Joseph's is good. The headteacher is a central and very important figure in promoting the Faith life of the school. The Parish Priest told the inspector that "His Faith drips off his finger tips". The headteacher is highly thought of by governors and parents. They recognise the workload he bears and the clear direction he has begun to set out in the short time he has been at the school. Under his leadership the school feels open and welcoming...

something parents are especially appreciative of. One parent reported that she felt she could ask about anything and he would respond positively. Children are very happy at St. Joseph's. Another parent said, "I can't think of any time when my children have not wanted to come to school in the morning". The school community has a strong Catholic identity which underpins everything it does and is obvious to anyone entering its doors.

The Governing Body saw a large turnover of members in September 2008. The Chair Person has made good progress in developing the skills of the Governing Body so that it can play a more active part in the leadership of the school. There are active committees in operation: overseeing buildings, finance, staffing and the curriculum. Individual governors take seriously their responsibilities, especially the SEN Governor, Child Protection Governor and RE Governor. They have made a good start on renewing a more proactive monitoring role.

The school building is well maintained and kept clean and safe by the caretaker and his staff. The school grounds are tidy, litter free and expansive. A good start has been made on developing a more stimulating playground environment for older pupils. This work has been done through consultation with the School Council with support from *The Friends of Joseph's*.

The school has worked to improve the systems it has in place to evaluate its own performance and has spent time and effort determining future improvement objectives. The school knows what it has to do to improve further and has good capacity to do so.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How good is the quality of Collective Worship?

Collective worship across the school is good. Children entering the school in Nursery and Reception are given good opportunities to learn about worship, prayer, spirituality and meditation. The caring and dedicated Nursery staff have created a well organised base, with an attractive and spacious outside area where children can enjoy and learn about growing vegetables, building dens and playing games together. All these things teach children of this age about how we can worship and learn about God in our everyday actions with those around us. Children in the Nursery and Reception spend a quiet moment together every morning, acknowledging each other and praising God. In older classes children show reverence and are extremely respectful during Collective Worship. Outstanding practice exists where children's news from home – their personal experiences of God's love - is shared and celebrated within collective worship. A little girl and boy in Year 1 and Year 2 were given a great deal of positive affirmation following the recent birth of a new baby in their family. In older classes, children are skilled in reading from scripture, using religious artefacts and including music in their worship. Year 6 are beginning to plan and lead their own acts of worship, with the support of their teacher. Overall, children's response to opportunities for prayer and worship is outstanding.

Parents expressed their enthusiasm for the efforts being made to enhance further links between the parish and school over recent years. They particularly mentioned KS2 attendance at the Parish Mass on Fridays during the Summer. The Parish Priest is keen to develop the use of the Church further where practical. The Parish Priest is a regular visitor in school and the children enjoy his visits. He says Mass in school at key points in the liturgical and academic year. The contribution to the spiritual and moral life of the school, made by Collective Worship is central to the outstanding behaviour of the children throughout all year groups. In Year 5 a Collective Worship was ended with the message "Let's spread God's Good News to everyone we meet today". All pupils, whatever their skills, knowledge or backgrounds are imbued with a tangible sense of belonging. They are positive and confident in their St Joseph's identity. Children very much enjoy the weekly Golden Book Assembly, where the achievements of individuals and groups, both in and out of school, can be celebrated by the headteacher.

During the inspection children from Year 4 made a visit, with the headteacher, to St Anne's Cathedral to join the Bishop in saying the Rosary. The school is investigating more ways to use the parish church for worship and as a learning resource.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RE

How well do pupils achieve in RE?

Children enter St Joseph's with average or slightly above average understanding of their Faith. Pupils gain knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate. The 'Here I Am' programme underpins the RE curriculum and ensures progression throughout the school. Pupils have a very positive attitude to their learning and work at a good pace. Their behaviour during lessons is outstanding and this is a significant strength of the school. Many children in the Reception class were able to express the thought that Jesus' friends would have been happy to find that he had not left them and had risen from the dead at Easter. In the Year 2 class, a little boy expressed his view that, "perhaps Jesus went back to his father in heaven because he was tired, and now it was up to the disciples to carry the workload of spreading God's Word".

The formal assessment and tracking of RE has recently been reviewed and work has started on embedding the new systems, which are based on diocesan guidelines. However, it is clear from an analysis of children's exercise books, displayed work, observed lessons and discussions with children and staff, as well as parents, that children make good rates of progress in all classes and especially in Year 2 and Year 3. They continue to make good progress through to the end of KS2 and by the time they are in Year 6 pupils are demonstrating very high levels of understanding of their Faith. Pupils are generally working at Level 2 by the end of KS1 and by the end of KS2 most are reaching Level 4 (above the national average in RE). Pupils attainment in RE is outstanding.

Pupils are gaining confidence in expressing themselves orally and in so doing give a clear indication of their knowledge and understanding of the subject. To improve attainment further the school should look at ways of empowering the more able pupils to use their talents more creatively and give them further responsibility in the planning, preparation and delivery of liturgies... A group of Year 6 boys showed they could rise to this type of risk-taking approach when they were observed leading a short Collective Worship during the inspection. Again in Year 6, pupils showed that they could dramatise the story of Pentecost and then take that experience and produce some effective pieces of poetry and creative writing.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN RE

How effective are Teaching and Learning in RE?

The quality of learning and teaching in RE at St. Joseph's is good with some elements of outstanding practice. In the best examples of practice teachers demonstrate high levels of knowledge of the Faith and expertise in teaching it. The headteacher monitors the teaching of RE through lesson observation, work scrutiny and the developing systems for analysing assessment data. Careful planning and good developmental marking are again elements which mark out the better examples of teaching practice. In these classes children are challenged to achieve their best in a variety of learning activities, from drama and role play to artwork and the writing of prayers to share with their peers. Outstanding practice is demonstrated by those teachers who take risks and give children opportunities to develop their creativity and independent learning skills. As a result, children in these lessons show more obvious enjoyment and enthusiasm for their RE learning. In a minority of observed lessons more able children could perhaps have been challenged further, given that their behaviour was exemplary. Open questioning and more careful differentiation of learning tasks was evident in the most impressive teaching examples. The use of ICT in teaching RE is developing in all classes, with one even making use of 'YouTube' to enhance

experiences. The school can improve further by exploring opportunities for pupils to use ICT in their learning activities.

Across the school opportunities for prayer and reflection during lessons makes an outstanding contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils.

Effective communication between all staff ensures that arrangements are in place to support pupils. Appropriate arrangements are in place to enable support staff to work effectively, though some thought could be usefully put to developing their responsibilities further. The school has only recently begun to address formal RE assessment across the school, but has made good progress so far.

All pupils show outstanding levels of behaviour. They are happy, extremely polite, completely calm, very comfortable and confident with the adults around them, whether it is in class, on the playground, in corridors, or in the dining hall. Children who are musical are able to learn instruments. Those who are sporty have a large number of opportunities available to them.

The School Council were interviewed as part of the inspection process and expressed general enthusiasm for RE. They particularly mentioned 'Hot Seating' and dramatisation as good features of lessons. They did not like sitting on the carpet for too long, and valued the comments made by teachers about their work much more if the teacher had written more than just 'Good Work' or 'Well Done' and instead had offered some ideas for improvement.

The school takes positive steps to inform parents about their child's learning in RE through a termly newsletter and they very much appreciate the emailing system established under the new headteacher. They showed similar appreciation for the '*Wednesday Word*' publication sent to them weekly.

Only a small number of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, though this number is rising. The children identified with SEN make good progress and their needs are well catered for.

Children in Year 5 and 6 are given extra responsibilities in a variety of ways. They help to settle new pupils into the Nursery and Reception classes in September through a Buddy System. They prepare and tidy the hall before and after Golden Book Assembly. They lead the School Council meetings and they are play helpers at lunchtime. Most importantly, they act as outstanding role models for younger children. There are a large variety of extra-curricular opportunities... Among them are Football, Netball, Rugby, Pottery, Athletics, Computer Club for Girls, and Dance.

The First Confession and First Eucharist programmes are taught within the school timetable, by a very experienced teacher, who is relatively new to the school. The school uses the '*I Belong*' scheme. She works with the parish where practical, and gives time and effort to ensuring that children who are not in the school are still included in the programme and invited to take part in liturgies and activities during the programme. Parents expressed a feeling that sometimes they would welcome more opportunities to be included "in the journey" their children were making.

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

The broad RE curricular provision at St Joseph's is good and more than meets all national requirements. The school takes advantage of Diocesan advice when new areas for improvement are considered, for example with assessment. There is a well balanced delivery of the 'Here I Am' programme which is supplemented by other resources, though the school is aware that further resources are still need, such as child-friendly crosses and age appropriate Bibles and stories in younger classes. The curriculum is enhanced by attractive displays and focal points in classrooms and corridors. The school Hall is dominated by a colourful banner proclaiming that, "We look to Christ's teachings for our values". A Training Day has been set aside in Autumn 2009 to review the Mission Statement.

All teachers encourage pupils to value prayer and ritual. For example, children in Year 2 mark the opening and closing of a Gospel reading with the formal phrases used in Church. Within class time there are many opportunities for quiet reflection, group prayer and liturgy.

Following some experimentation in Year 6, the school is now considering the adoption of weekly ethos statements and possibly the use of the accompanying circle time programme to reinforce them. Family life and sex education is appropriately planned and provided for through the '*In the Beginning*' scheme covering family life and sex education. Parents are very supportive of this scheme.

The school works with the parish in a close and enthusiastic manner to ensure that pupils' Faith needs are satisfied. Discussions with pupils and staff in school support the view that inclusion is a shared vision, where dialogue and collaboration are encouraged. Respect for all is tangible and all show concern for the well-being of others, locally, nationally and internationally. The children are able to speak about the charitable causes they have supported. Those that are most recent include *The Good Shepherd Fund* and *Catholic Care, Mary's Meals, Peru Badges* and *MacMillan Nurses*. One girl in Year 5, during an observed RE lesson said, "We know we are very lucky in this class and our school, and we should help people who are not as lucky as us". Children in two classes recently visited the Grand Mosque in Leeds as part of their learning about Other World Faiths. Parents were very supportive of this idea, believing that it helps their children to understand the culture and faith traditions of people they would not normally meet. The school has recently established a twinning relationship with a school in Leeds which has a greater socio-economic and cultural diversity.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF RE

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

Leadership and management of RE is good. The headteacher, who is also the RE leader, has a significant impact on the Faith life of the school. Together with the staff, governors and Parish Priest, he is strongly focussed on the school's mission and promoting the faith development of the pupils. Areas that would benefit from further development are identified and addressed within the school's improvement plan, which is reviewed annually and jointly produced by the staff, headteacher and governors, with input from parents through a forum and occasional surveys. The headteacher and his senior leadership team are working well together, to move the school forward.

Resourcing needs are identified by the school on an on-going basis. The school has recently updated the class Bibles and teacher support materials in classrooms and further needs have been identified. Assessment of RE attainment is in its early stages, although some work has taken place in recent months, with the compilation of a portfolio of assessed work. The headteacher has attended assessment CPD at Hinsley Hall and is clear about what the next steps should be. Good links have been established with parents, who are enthusiastically supportive of the school. They enjoy attending Mass and assemblies or liturgies in school. All children feel included in every activity that is offered. They also feel part of the local community, taking an active part in sporting tournaments, drama, art and music events through links with the Elmet Family of schools and St John Fisher Catholic High School and the Boston Spa Sports Partnership. The school is not yet part of an Extended Services Cluster. Extra-curricular activities are many and varied. They help to widen children's horizons and build their self-confidence and enjoyment in school across all subjects.

The school is aware that musical expertise across the school, particularly in liturgy, is experiencing a reduced profile at present because two members of staff who played the piano have left the school. There are plans to cultivate support from parishioners and parents in the near future.

The SEN Coordinator, who is new to the school, has made good progress in reviewing procedures for identifying those children who need more support than others. She has a clear idea of which children have special needs in each class and works closely with other teachers, parents and local authority officers to obtain advice and support.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS SUMMARY

ASPECT	GRADE	DESCRIPTOR
OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS	2	GOOD
THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL		
How effective are Leadership and Management in developing the Catholic life of the school?	2	GOOD
How good is the quality of Collective Worship?	2	GOOD
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION		
How well do pupils achieve in RE?	2	GOOD
How effective are Teaching and learning in RE?	2	GOOD
How well does the RE curriculum meet the needs and interests of pupils?	2	GOOD
How effective are Leadership and Management in raising achievement and supporting all pupils in RE?	2	GOOD