



INSPECTION REPORT

St Joseph's Catholic School

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DfE Number: 8654610

Headteacher: Mrs Rachel Ridley

Chair of Governors: Mr Paul Hooper

**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: 22nd-23rd September 2016

Date of previous inspection: 18th-19th May 2011

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington

Assisting Inspector: Mr Frank Toner

Description of the school

St. Joseph's Catholic School is an over subscribed secondary school, which serves the parishes of the Salisbury deanery. Many of the students travel to school by bus from Salisbury and other outlying areas. Its partner primary schools include St. Osmunds, Salisbury, and Christ the King in Amesbury. There is a developing, fruitful Catholic collaborative partnership with the other Wiltshire Catholic schools. The number of students on roll has grown to 490, of whom 23.6% are Catholic. The average level of attainment on entry to the school is significantly below national expectation. The percentages of statemented, SEN registered, and disadvantaged students, are above the Wiltshire average.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 1

This is an outstanding school because:

- the governing body and all leaders are fully committed to the promotion and nurturing of the school's Catholic life and mission as their first priority, and have communicated this very successfully to the whole school community;
- the senior leadership are relentless in their commitment to effecting the highest quality of Catholic education, with the result that the school has become a clear exemplar of best practice;
- students from all faiths and none are made welcome, and all show respect and genuine interest in the views and beliefs of others;
- the behaviour of students and their care for others is exemplary. They are role models for each other and this contributes enormously to the spirituality and ethos of the school; their behaviour for learning is impeccable, they enjoy their RE studies, and their progress over time is remarkable;
- the quality of teaching is consistently good with much that is outstanding;
- the RE subject leader is inspirational, with high expectations, providing guidance and support to staff, and constantly developing and improving provision, which results in outstanding outcomes for the vast majority of students;
- students are proud of their Catholic school and heartily embrace the many opportunities to grow in their spiritual lives, so that they internalise and live out the values promoted, and come to understand the impact of faith in their daily lives.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is outstanding

- This is a school that knows itself well because it has embedded rigorous and reliable procedures for self evaluation; these enable strengths and weaknesses to be highlighted and action taken to improve practice and outcomes. The governing body's Pastoral and Ethos committee, including the link governor for RE, meet regularly to monitor and evaluate the school's Catholic life and RE, and in turn it reports back to the full governing body. The school frequently elicits formal feedback from parents, staff and students on their views and suggestions for improvement, and these are fed into the development plan and acted upon. As a result it has a detailed and realistic view of what has to be done, and has the capacity to follow through its objectives
- There is a remarkable and total commitment from every member of the staff to work together to achieve the very best for the students, as well as promoting Catholic values across all the subjects. Staff morale is high and they are excellent role models for their charges.

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- Action to tackle the areas for development noted in the last inspection have been successfully addressed, particularly the greater consistency in the best quality of teaching and learning, and the review of the marking policy. The governors have already taken advantage of diocesan training opportunities. This school has the capacity, consistency and depth of established successful structures and practice, to sustain its present excellence in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- provide further opportunities for students to take real ownership in the planning and organising of their class, and whole school, liturgies and assemblies. Also to encourage them to take more student- led initiatives, which will further enhance the Catholic life of the school, and give them more ownership and deeper commitment to its prayer life and values.
- ensure that teachers develop further their questioning skills in lessons, not only to push students to make the best intellectual efforts they are capable of, but also to frequently check their students' understanding.

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

Grade 1

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

- students have a secure understanding of what it means to be in a Catholic school and what specifically distinguishes it from other schools. They accept and flourish in an atmosphere rich in faith and spirituality. They can articulate for instance, the impact that the prayer life of the school has on their view of life and their relationship with others. Many were involved in the creation of a Values Corridor and Tree, which they contributed to by customising the Jesuit pupil profile - now prominently displayed around the school. This will feed into a revisit of the school's own mission statement in January. The older students are organising and presenting specific assemblies on each virtue, such as Respect and Integrity;
- students contribute significantly through their response to questionnaires; for instance, suggesting more music in liturgies, making the prayer/worship places more 'spiritual', and having the sequence and significance of the Mass explained more often;
- they speak confidently about the importance of faith in their lives, and are able to make links with scripture and the values expressed in Church teaching;
- there is a strong expectation that students will take on a range of responsibilities to show they are alert to the needs of others. For instance, they play an important role in raising money for charities both locally and further afield. The Fair Trade group, Cherished, and SVP are well attended and very proactive;
- students have a deep respect for those from different backgrounds. This is due in no small measure to an impressive understanding of different faiths, which they have studied and reflected on in RE. In conversation they articulated with conviction the view that 'faith is not responsible for terrorism, but people who do bad things'. There is a real sense of belonging here shared by all regardless of faith or none, which feeds into their understanding of British values and culture;
- there is a developing chaplaincy team, led mainly by staff, which takes the lead in promoting the school chapel, where many gather together voluntarily especially for the newly formed Adoration led by the parish youth worker. The parish priest has encouraged strong links with the parish, including a Youth Mass on Sunday evenings, which is well attended. However, even more students could be actively involved in taking on responsibilities for the chaplaincy and the school community's Catholic life. The school has recognised this as one of its key actions in the coming months.

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

- students come from a wide variety of faith backgrounds. Most enter the school at levels of attainment and understanding of religious knowledge and practice, which are significantly below expectations. However, they make rapid progress from the start so that by the end of Key Stage 3 they are meeting expectations and some are exceeding them. At Key Stage 4 this rapid progress continues. All students are entered for GCSE RE and the results over the last three years demonstrate a remarkable improvement, particularly in 2015 when 78.9% achieved grades A* - C (36% attaining A*-A) and the average point score was 44.00, well ahead of the average in other subjects. The predictions for the 2017 examination grades show continuing improvement. This represents outstanding achievement and progress over

time. Other groups such as those with SEN and disadvantaged students, make similar excellent progress because of very effective planned interventions and the pro active support of learning assistants;

- discussions with students and responses in their written work show clearly that as they move up the school, important literacy skills have been secured, and they become more confident in using religious language in a meaningful way. Their ability to learn independently, and with others, is also increasing, demonstrated in the quality of their research homework. They also understand the similarities and differences between different faiths;
- they are committed, curious, and increasingly self confident in lessons. They are proud of their achievements and demonstrate a thirst for knowledge and a well developed respect for other's ideas and points of view. In a show of hands, students interviewed gave top marks to RE for enjoyment, and unanimously said they would like to study it to A Level. Their impeccable conduct reflects the school's successful strategies to promote the highest standards of behaviour.

c) How well pupils lead, respond to and participate in the Prayer Life of the School

- all students irrespective of faith background participate fully, and feel included, in the prayer life of the school. They show reverence, attentiveness, and willingness to play their part. They are becoming more involved in the planning and preparation of their liturgies and assemblies. This could be encouraged even further: they already have the examples and role modelling of the older students, and as the teachers become more confident in letting them take the initiative, so they the students will become more confident in taking ownership of the prayer life of the school;
- they value the many prayer opportunities during the school day, be it at the beginning of every lesson or the end of the day. They have a wide repertoire of prayer styles and use the school's Little Book of Prayer daily, which has some beautifully expressed prayers and psalms for every occasion;
- the sacramental and liturgical life of the school is reflected in the assemblies, Masses, and the celebrations throughout the Church's liturgical year of the life of Jesus, and the saints. Students contributed to choosing the patron saint of their house and researched their lives. In this way they are provided with inspiring role models and this contributes enormously to their spiritual, moral and vocational development.

How effective are leaders and governors in developing the Catholic Life of the school?

Grade 1

a) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

- leaders and governors very effectively promote, nurture and sustain the Catholic ethos of the school as their primary concern and care, and the main thrust of its strategic planning. Links with parents, carers and guardians are strong;
- the governing body is a challenging, knowledgeable and practical influence in the life of the school. They meet all the statutory, canonical, and diocesan requirements fully;

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- robust and rigorous processes of self evaluation ensure that judgements are accurate and reliable. This is achieved mainly by constant monitoring through the Governors' Pastoral and Ethos Committee, but just as importantly by asking parents, staff and students their opinions as to what could be better. As a result of their feedback, the school leadership knows itself very well, can more accurately assess the impact of its actions, and can quickly re shape its improvement planning where necessary;
 - the provision for staff induction and in service training is excellent, particularly for RE staff. This has resulted in more confident and knowledgeable teachers, becoming, for example, more confident in assessment and in setting learning objectives;
 - the spiritual life of the staff has not been neglected. Staff prayers and retreat have been introduced and are well attended and appreciated by all. This has bound the staff together in commitment and unity, sharing the same goals and values of the school's mission. There is at least one Inset day annually devoted specifically to Catholic life and spirituality.

b) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the curriculum for Religious Education and relationship education, and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

- leaders and governors use data and monitoring information intelligently and effectively, exercising careful oversight of the curriculum and learning outcomes. They receive termly reports from the RE leader and take part in learning walks around the school. Where necessary they challenge and hold staff to account, as is evident in a scrutiny of the minutes of governor's meetings;
- subject development plans are drawn up and used as working documents, which are added to or otherwise amended during the course of each term. They do not remain as general aims or wishes, but instead are measurable objectives to be achieved over a stated time;
- the subject leader is inspirational, able to communicate high expectations to both teachers and students. The support and training given to teachers, the implementation of the syllabus, and the schemes of work all contribute to the outstanding outcomes for the students. Likewise, the lesson observations and work scrutinies monitor the impact of both teaching quality and students' progress over time, as well as planning at all levels. Assessment and monitoring secure progress very effectively.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 1

a) The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

- teaching is very effective in promoting purposeful learning, the engagement of the students, their enjoyment, and their outstanding results. Their excellent attitudes to learning have a strong impact on their rapid progress and achievement. Learning assistants are involved in planning lessons with the teacher so that interventions have their maximum effect. Individual learning needs are identified and tasks pitched to meet their learning needs, be they the less able or the higher attaining students;
- teaching is consistently good with some excellent practice. An example of outstanding teaching observed was a challenging philosophical exploration of arguments for the existence of God. The students rose to the challenge and concentrated on the argument with real intellectual effort, but also with arguments and opinions of their own;

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- the quality of teachers' questioning is on occasion inconsistent, which results in missed opportunities to stretch students even further, or failing to check that they really did understand before moving on;
 - the assessment and marking policies are well embedded, and particularly at Key Stage 4 they are a tremendous support, but they also challenge students to raise the quality of their written work. Many Key Stage 3 students expressed their appreciation for the help given by teachers in their comments and marking.

b) The extent to which the Curriculum promotes pupils' learning

- The RE curriculum meets all Bishops Conferences requirements. It is broad and balanced so that students can explore and develop their own values and beliefs. They explore themes such as prejudice, fairness, compassion and injustice, which they then link to the objects of their charity fundraising, and outreach to others in society who are more needy;
- the study of other world faiths is a real strength of this inclusive school because it promotes tolerance, understanding, and respect for others beliefs, rather than ignorance and suspicion. It also inculcates an appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures. Provision for sex and relationship education is in place and approved by the governors adhering to diocesan guidelines;
- the curriculum design promotes continuity and progress, and leads to effective teaching and learning. It promotes spiritual, moral and vocational development and is taught through the lens of the Faith.

c) The quality of the Prayer life provided by the School

- The prayer life of the school is fully inclusive and joyful. Prayer punctuates the school day and is part of every celebration. There is now a focus on encouraging more students to organise and lead collective worship;
- The parish priest makes an important and valued contribution to the spiritual life of the school and reflects its role in the wider mission of the parish and the universal Church;
- both teachers and students have created colourful and thought provoking displays around the school, which remind the whole community of the liturgical cycle, the topics the pupils are currently studying, and are supportive of the school's vibrant Catholic life;
- students are at present involved in planning for the new chapel, and contributing ideas for an outside dedicated prayer space.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 117 parental questionnaires received. All were overwhelmingly positive about the school and the quality of their children's education. Some typical responses included:

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

The school has an atmosphere 'that is encouraging, supportive and also gets the best out of the pupils academically. I genuinely feel the school is rather special'.

The school has a' good academic record. Polite pupils. Like the attitudes and ethos of the school. Staff very welcoming'.

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