

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about the school

St. Joseph's is a much smaller than average sized Catholic Primary School situated in Withnell, serving the parish of St. Joseph. There are 61 children on roll of whom 35 are baptised Catholic, 19 come from other Christian denominations, and 7 from other faith or religious traditions. There are 5 teachers of whom 4 teach Religious Education, 4 are Catholic. Two teacher's have a suitable qualification in Religious Education. Since the last inspection an executive headteacher has been appointed. She spends the equivalent of 2 days a week in school with a senior teacher overseeing the remainder of the week.

Key for inspection grades

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| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

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Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

Inspection Judgements

Overall effectiveness:

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main Findings:-

St. Joseph's is good with some outstanding features overall in providing Catholic Education. There is a shared vision for Catholic Education which is embraced by the whole school community and reinforced in the school's Mission Statement '*St Joseph's family learn together with love and faith in Jesus...*' Since the last inspection the school has securely built on previous satisfactory performance. Self evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Outcomes for pupils are good. There is no significant difference in performance between groups of pupils. Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are good. Since the last Inspection, St. Joseph's has been very successful in addressing the areas it has identified for improvement. The leadership team is deeply motivated and consistently communicates its high expectations to staff in order to secure improvement. Staff are affirmed and supported. Teachers are provided with in-service to support their ongoing development. Realistic and challenging plans stem from the accurate analysis obtained through monitoring and are being used effectively to improve outcomes. Any underperformance is challenged.

Overall the school has good capacity for sustained improvement. Together with the newly appointed executive headteacher and her vision for St. Joseph's, the school has already begun to successfully address areas for development identified in the Self Evaluation Document.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Raise the standards of attainment in Religious Education further by:
 - embedding the language of the level descriptors and driver words into planning;
 - ensuring differentiation is by both task and outcome;
 - providing a range of 'open-ended' tasks to challenge the more able pupils;
 - incorporating 'next steps' into marking to inform pupils' learning;
 - ensuring 'plenary sessions' draw together pupils' learning, challenge their thinking and move them on.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Pupils' achievement in Religious Education is good. On entry to school many children have a limited knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith. Pupils' attainment in Religious Education is good. Pupils make very good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities but opportunities need to be provided to extend the more able through incorporation of a range of open ended tasks. Analysis of assessments undertaken provides evidence of pupils generally attaining the appropriate level for their age and stage of development in

each key stage with some exceeding expectations. Pupils have a sound understanding of Religious Education. There is no difference in performance between pupils of different gender. Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are good. Pupils are becoming increasingly more religiously literate. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developing appropriate to their age or capacity. They are developing the skills that enable them to think spiritually, ethically and theologically and are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

Pupils' enjoyment of their learning is very good as shown by their interest, enthusiasm and excellent behaviour. Pupils are actively involved in developing and evaluating the Catholic character of the school through sharing and living out their motto '*Respect and learn together through faith*'. Pupils' have an outstanding sense of belonging to the school community and value and respect others. Pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility in the school by becoming school councillors, house captains and prefects. Pupils' have been instrumental in generating ideas for the development of the outside environment including installation of safety gates, purchase of novelty bins and play 'Timber Trail'. Pupils have benefitted from participation in outdoor education residential stays at Boretton Park in Shropshire, Tower Wood in Wales and Hothersall Lodge in Preston. Pupils are considerate and caring of others both in school and the wider community. This is evident in their many charitable fundraising events in support of CAFOD, Nugent Care, Derian House Hospice, Rosemere Cancer Foundation and collecting food for the parish harvest baskets to name but a few. Education for personal relationships has fostered positive attitudes in pupils. Pupils take an increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions. Many of the older pupils act as buddies to the younger children and all pupils share in keeping the school environment clean and tidy. They praise and acknowledge the contribution of others. They show a readiness to embrace and celebrate their lived experiences.

Pupils are very good in responding to and participating in the schools Collective Worship. They are becoming increasingly more confident preparing and leading worship from their earliest years. They act with reverence and are keen to participate in a variety of gatherings. They sing joyfully, reflect in silence and join in community prayers appropriately and with confidence. No-one is expected to act in a manner contrary to their beliefs and all show mutual respect. Pupils' knowledge of prayer and liturgy is increasing. They are becoming familiar with a variety of prayer styles. They appreciate and are open to the Word of God in the scriptures.

| How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils | |
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| How well pupils achieve in Religious Education | 2 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education | 2 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of pupils' learning and their progress in Religious Education | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

The quality of teaching at St. Joseph's is effective in ensuring that pupils are interested, engaged and make very good progress. Teachers take into account pupils' prior learning when planning so that the work consolidates, builds and extends their knowledge and understanding. However, there needs to be a more consistent approach when planning lesson objectives using the language of the level descriptors and driver words. Floor books are used to good effect across the school as a way of recording pupils' ideas and promote discussion. These are regularly shared with parents. Evidence from pupils' books suggests that there is an over reliance on differentiation by outcome rather than task and this needs to be addressed to create greater depth and challenge especially for the more able pupils. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work independently, in pairs and collaboratively in small groups. Excellent use is made of technology i.e. Interactive Whiteboard, audio and visual media clips etc. Very good use is made of support staff to optimise learning opportunities within lessons. Teachers and others use a variety of strategies to sustain and motivate pupils e.g. praise and affirmation, talk partners, role play, outdoor environment etc. Pupils are informed of their progress and how to improve orally however, marking, whilst affirmative, needs to be closer linked to the objectives set and pupils 'next steps' clearly identified. Plenary sessions need to be improved. In the best lesson this was used to good effect in drawing together pupils' learning, challenging their thinking and moving them on. Simply using a 'show and tell' strategy to end Religious Education lessons does not allow this to take place.

The assessment of pupils work in Religious Education is good. The school has good assessment strategies which provide accurate and detailed information on the achievement of all the pupils. Teachers are able to identify how well pupils are achieving and tackle underachievement. All teachers enable pupils to evaluate their own learning using an Assessment For Learning 'thumbs up' strategy but this repertoire needs extending throughout Religious Education lessons not just at the end. Formal assessment tasks are undertaken in line with Archdiocesan guidance. Assessment information is collated by the subject leader and shared with the Headteacher, governors and parents. Achievement and effort are celebrated at weekly assemblies where children receive 'Star of the Week' awards. Pupils are affirmed and know how well they are doing but further development is needed on what they need to do to improve further.

The curriculum is good in meeting pupils' needs. The school using the Here I Am programme recommended by the Archdiocese meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. A whole school approach is used and appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets National and Archdiocesan requirements. Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. Planning ensures full coverage of the Religious Education programme. The schools display areas are vibrant and enrich pupils learning in Religious Education. Every year group has their own 'prayer wall' and collective worship board. Curriculum topic outlines are provided for parents. The school implements new curriculum developments as appropriate. Enrichment activities such as French club, art and crafts, volleyball, young voices, etc. have a positive

impact on the curriculum. The Religious Education curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The Collective Worship provided at St. Joseph's is outstanding. It reflects the Catholic character of the school and takes into account the Faith backgrounds of the pupils. Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the Spiritual needs of the pupils. Opportunities are provided to enable full, active and conscious participation of the whole school community. Children are enabled to pray formally and informally. The school provides opportunities for staff to develop the skills in planning and leading Collective Worship. The teachers provide opportunities and resources to help children from the earliest years to develop the skills necessary to plan, lead and participate in Collective Worship. Providing pupils with crosses to wear when planning and leading worship has made the time both special and very reverent. The school is currently engaged in developing a 'faith garden' in collaboration with the local community and pupils from the local High School. This will enhance current practise in allowing for opportunities to worship in the outdoor environment.

| How effective the provision is for Catholic Education | |
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| The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education | 2 |
| The effectiveness of assessment in Religious Education | 2 |
| The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs | 2 |
| The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school | 1 |

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the schools

Leaders and managers are very good in promoting and developing the Catholic life of the school and show an outstanding understanding of and commitment to the Mission of the Church. This is reflected in the Schools own recently developed Mission Statement '*...to become the people God calls us to be*'. All who form part of the school were involved in the development of the Mission Statement and motto. Its aims and practical objectives direct and guide every aspect of school life and are a useful tool by which the school evaluate its effectiveness. The Self Evaluation Document provides evidence of the schools monitoring, searching analysis and self challenge. Their analysis provides a basis to celebrate the schools strengths and outlining areas for development. A range of opportunities for Spiritual and Moral developments are provided for staff and pupils such as praying together during Collective Worship, participation in Before You Begin sessions, attendance at Archdiocesan topic and spirituality days etc. These enable opportunities for reflection, growth and spiritual renewal.

Leaders and managers are good in the way they use monitoring data to evaluate the schools performance although it is recognised that this is in its infancy given that the executive headteacher and her team are newly established. The subject leader is also the senior teacher and together they have already begun to see improvements in the school. Morale is high and working together with the remaining staff she has made an impact on the way in which the school plans, monitors and assesses Religious Education. Together with the executive

headteacher she has a clear vision and outline to enable the school to move forward. Her enthusiasm and commitment to raising the profile and standards in Religious Education are very good. She knows the schools strengths and is working hard to ensure the schools strategic plans are executed. Excellent documentation guides and directs all staff in the delivery of the subject.

Governors are good in fulfilling their responsibilities and discharge their duties well. They have effectively helped to shape the direction of the school through their involvement in the development of the Mission Statement and in their total commitment to the Catholic life of the school. Their relationships with staff are constructive and supportive. They have the expertise to meet the school's needs and some members have attended governor training.

Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all. Prayer, worship and the liturgical life of the school reflects and respects the religious diversity within the school. There are positive relationships at every level within the school. Leaders and managers facilitate pupils' involvement in service to the local neighbourhood served by the school and the wider community. The school is in the unique position of being situated directly underneath the parish church. Children have access to St. Joseph's via an internal staircase and regularly make use of it during lunchtimes for quiet reflection. The parish Catechist is a regular visitor to the school and has been instrumental in supporting pupils' on their faith journey. She uses the Wednesday Word across the whole school and the school community is enriched by her presence and witness. She works alongside families in preparing pupils for Sacramental celebrations. Opportunities are provided for parents, carers the local and wider Faith communities to participate in a variety of celebrations of the 'Here I Am' rejoice assemblies and the Church's liturgical year. The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and warmly supports the schools work and commitment to developing the Catholic ethos. Such is the commitment shown by the school to this end, in the past year a number of pupils have converted to Catholicism along with their families.

A real strength of St. Joseph's is the work that it has undertaken to further develop the partnership between home, school and parish in support of its 'family friendly' atmosphere. The school operates an 'open door' policy and parents are consulted regularly and involved in a variety of ways in the life of the school. The school provides a 'Fun 4 Kids' before and after school club which is well attended. The school also benefits from a very active Friends of St. Joseph's Association which organises and raises funds through events such as quiz nights, hosting discos and adult social evenings in support of the school. The monies raised have been used to provide resources for the school including bikes, trikes, books, outdoor toys and the timber trail. St. Joseph's also supports the annual Brinscall Festival and takes an active part in the village community parade and activities.

The use of the 'Here I am' programme promotes community cohesion. Dialogue and collaboration is encouraged with people who hold different beliefs and values. Children have explored the beliefs and values of other faiths and religions including Judaism, Islam and Sikhism. The children have also benefitted from visiting various places of worship in support of this e.g. the Metropolitan Cathedral, a Sikh Gudwara, and the Synagogue. This helps to promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently.

| How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School | |
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| 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 | 2 |
| How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils | 2 |
| The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are addressed decisively and responsibilities met | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion | 1 |