



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
Holloway Hill, Malmesbury, Wilts. SN16 9BB  
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DfE Number: 8653418  
URN: 126424

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Ann Wood  
Chair of Governors: Mrs Nuala Oughton

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**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**

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Date of inspection: July 5-6th 2018  
Date of previous inspection: 9-10<sup>th</sup> May 2013

Reporting Inspector: Mr J Skivington  
Additional Inspector: Mrs W D'Arcy

## **Description of school**

St Joseph's is an average size primary school with 148 pupils on roll, of whom 58% are baptised Catholics. It serves the parish of St. Aldhelm's, Malmesbury, and the surrounding area. The proportions of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), and pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, are both below average. There are 18.24% of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), and 13% of pupils receive the pupil premium. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals. The long serving head teacher left the school in April of this year, and there is at present a temporary acting head. A member of the teaching staff has taken on the role of religious education (RE) leader in the last six weeks.

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)**

**Grade 2**

### **This is a good school because:**

- The outcomes, the provision, and the leadership and management of Catholic life are all good. The pupils' care and respect for each other make a positive contribution to the ethos of the school, and the whole school community reflects its mission and values.
- Outcomes for religious education (RE) are generally good. The quality of teaching is good overall, with some inconsistencies. The leadership and management of RE in monitoring and planning for improvement requires improvement to be securely good.
- The provision for the prayer life of the school and the pupils' response are both good. Despite the recent period of instability and consequent challenges, the leadership and management have been determined and focused not only in sustaining the spiritual life of the whole school community, but in nurturing and enriching it further.

### **The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is good.**

- The school is experiencing difficulty in appointing a new head teacher following the departure of the previous incumbent, but it has successfully sustained its ethos and provision thanks to the temporary leadership and the governing body, as well as the positive morale and commitment of the whole staff. The areas for development highlighted in the previous inspection have been addressed. The pupils have more ownership of their prayer life and many are now able to plan and lead collective worship. The assessment programme for RE is in place and is beginning to provide a better picture of pupils' progress, although there is still significant work to be done in terms of accuracy and individual pupil self assessment. This the school recognises and is working towards.

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**What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve teachers' subject knowledge so that they can in turn deepen pupils' theological understanding.
- Employ more robust questioning strategies, which check pupils' understanding, and to use formative marking more effectively to inform next steps in their learning.
- All leaders should become more robust, rigorous, and challenging in monitoring the provision and outcomes in RE, and in particular should raise teachers' expectations of pupil effort in terms of the quality, quantity and presentation of their written work.

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

- Pupils appreciate and participate willingly in the Catholic life of the school. In their good behaviour both in the classroom and around the school, they reflect the values and character of the school. Led by the head boy and girl together with the governors, the pupils played a significant part in the renewal and re-interpretation of the mission statement '*Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus, loving and serving Together*' carried out in 2017. This was done through pupil conferencing which allowed them the opportunity to put their own ideas about the school mission in writing and on displays, enabling them to contribute and participate in a more planned and systematic way in evaluating the Catholic character of the school.
- Pupils take on positions of responsibility and leadership of Catholic life through the school council and chaplaincy team. The older ones lead and provide good role models for the younger children, for instance by accompanying them into Mass and assemblies. The school council feel that they are able to make decisions affecting their school life and take action on a variety of issues, particularly their charity outreach.
- Pupils demonstrate through their caring behaviour and their sense of pride and belonging, that they are a part not only of a school community, but also of a parish family. They take part regularly in parish Masses and events and offer an inclusive welcome to those from different cultures and backgrounds, which are celebrated and affirmed.
- Pupils make a positive contribution to the common good in the school and wider community, especially in planning outreach to others through many charities such as Samaritans' Purse, Mission Together, and British Heart Foundation. The chaplaincy team organise the Harbour Project for Refugees and Christmas bazaar, and all are involved in supporting CAFOD and other global and local causes. This outreach to others in need encourages their interest and practical response to spiritual, moral, and ethical issues.

**b) The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- The provision for the Catholic life of the school is good. The school's mission and Catholic ethos are at the centre of all the school does and is very evident in the environment and the colourful displays around the school. The new revitalised

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mission statement is displayed in every area of the school and frequently referred to.

- St. Joseph's is a welcoming and inclusive community in which all are valued and invited to participate. As a result, all have a strong sense of belonging to a community that celebrates difference and diversity. This is supported by the multi-faith topics in the RE syllabus and the school GEMS or values, which are prominently displayed and promoted in class and assemblies. The chaplaincy group are proactive in leading prayer and reflections, particularly lower down the school. They are also active in the parish, preparing the altar, serving and reading, for school/parish Masses in the nearby church.
- The pastoral provision gives every child, but especially the vulnerable, valuable support, patience, and care. This pastoral support and care is available for all in the school community, including new staff who are helped, through example and CPD, to understand the Catholic nature of the school. As a result, they become fully committed to its mission and are real role models for the children. The quality of PSHE and of the relationships and sex education programme is good and ties in closely with the pupils' spiritual and moral development. The parents of the children often voice their appreciation of warmth and care shown to every individual child.

**c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- Leaders and governors promote the Catholic ethos of the school as their first priority, and they monitor its quality regularly. The chair of governors and the parish priest are a frequent, supportive, and welcome presence in the school. Governors visit the school and attend assemblies and liturgies when they are able. However, an established and more focused cycle of monitoring visits would provide a more robust and reliable picture. Feedback in terms of evaluation and planning for future improvement, as well as the impact of this planning, need to be more systematically recorded.
- Leaders and governors are aware of the pastoral vision for the diocese 'A Future Full of Hope'. They keep themselves involved through diocesan training and show themselves open to advice and collaboration with the other partner Catholic schools in the Samuel Partnership. They are themselves models of good practice and commitment to the Catholic ethos of the school and are well thought of by the parents.
- Governors have ensured that the school values are integrated into and across the curriculum so that they contribute in a planned way to pupils' spiritual, moral, and vocational development. Through INSET and CPD the leaders and governors promote staff engagement with, and understanding of, the Catholic

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life of the school. The impact of this support would be even more effective if measured and evaluated.

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

- Pupils come to the school from varied backgrounds and with different levels of knowledge and understanding. Progress is difficult to measure initially as the school currently has no recent record of baseline assessments, but there is a plan in place to introduce this in September. The work in pupils' books shows that they make a really good start in the early years and make good progress over time, so that by the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils have reached their expected level of attainment and achievement. The generally good progress continues in the later years, with some inconsistencies linked to weaker teaching. However, by the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils have made the expected level of progress. A small number of pupils make better than expected progress.
- There are no significant differences in the progress of pupils with special educational needs or with disabilities, thanks to the help they receive from supportive teaching assistants, and planned intervention. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) quickly catch up with their peers in terms of literacy. Where the progress of learning is slower, it is often because the learning tasks are not sufficiently differentiated, particularly for the less able, but also for the more able pupils who are insufficiently challenged, particularly at Key Stage 2. Skills such as Bible referencing are secure.
- The extent of pupils' religious literacy develops well as they go through the school, although there are gaps in their understanding of some key concepts which teachers who are less experienced, do not pick up and correct. Pupils, though not all, say they enjoy RE lessons. They can learn independently, in pairs, and in groups. The more able pupils in particular are ready to be stretched with more research-type learning so that they actively seek to improve their learning and become competent learners.

**b) The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education**

- The quality of teaching over time is generally good and promotes learning, as well as the enjoyment and progress of the pupils. Where teaching is good, teachers have a good rapport with the pupils and have high expectations of effort. Questioning is strong where it checks understanding, but also challenges pupils to think more deeply. So much depends, however, on the depth of the subject knowledge and understanding of the teacher. The expectations of teachers regarding the quality and quantity of work varies, as does the neatness and care which the pupils take to present their work.

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- The marking policy is embedded and includes the element of pupil self assessment which was a development point in the last inspection report, but the impact on progress is unclear. Teachers' comments do not always have the desired impact on progress or elicit a response from the pupils. However, in the best practice, pupils are offered the opportunity and time to improve their work with guidance from the teacher and learning assistant.
  - The assessment of pupils' work is carried out regularly and levels of attainment are in the pupils' books. The pupils know what they have learned in any task or topic but, are less aware of precisely how they can move on to the next level. Although data is collected on the progress of pupils' progress, there is little evidence that it is used to plan individual learning objectives. Partly as a result of the previous headteacher's departure, and the recent changes in RE leadership, the school could not readily provide recorded evidence of past data on progress and achievement. The school is now working on assessment and moderation with support from the Samuel Partnership.

**c) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education**

- Leaders and governors are well aware of the difficulties affecting RE in this time of transition, particularly because reliable and accurate structures to gather, analyse, evaluate and incorporate evidence into planning for future improvement have never been fully developed and embedded. There is no rigorous system in place to monitor provision and outcomes, and little written assessment of the impact of lesson walks and book scrutiny on raising the quality of teaching and learning. This is an aspect of the leadership and management of RE that requires urgent improvement to be good.
- The positive support for the new and relatively inexperienced RE leader is provided by school leaders and through diocesan training and collaboration with the other RE leaders in the Samuel Partnership. All teachers' subject knowledge and confidence in teaching a specialist subject like RE are well supported by the link governor for RE and the parish priest, and are rapidly improving.
- The RE curriculum meets the Bishops' Conference requirements, as well as any additional requirements of the diocesan Bishop in terms of the curriculum and the time allocated to RE. Pupils learn about the other major world religions through the topics in the RE syllabus. While the subject has parity with other core subjects in terms of resourcing, staffing and accommodation, it does not yet have a similarly high expectation of academic rigour.
- The curriculum and schemes of work are suitable for the learning and progress of different groups as they move through the school, but more thought needs to



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be given to the setting of appropriately differentiated tasks which will meet every pupil's specific learning needs.

### a) How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's prayer life

- The quality of the prayer life of the school is good. The pupils show a real interest and many, following the example of the chaplaincy team, actively participate at every stage, from the planning and preparation to the presentation of liturgy and assembly. They regularly use their own time to write prayers and post-its for the large prayer board in the hall. On liturgical 'high days' the chaplaincy team lead prayers relevant to the liturgical calendar across the school, taking responsibility for content and key roles. Key Stage 1 pupils will be encouraged and helped from the start of next term to plan their own collective worship opportunities.
- Daily prayers and reflections actively involve a good number of pupils in one role or another. Every pupil, regardless of faith background, feels welcome to participate fully in the school's prayer life and collective worship. The prayer areas in each class are a reflective focus for daily prayer and have examples of the pupils' own prayers and reflections on mission. The chaplaincy team have had input into the design of the attractive prayer garden.
- There are useful planning sheets to guide the pupils in their worship preparation, and it would be helpful if these included space to review and evaluate their efforts and to suggest improvement. This 'even better if' self evaluation is not yet embedded.
- The prayer life of the school contributes significantly to the spiritual and moral development of the children. Their 'moral compass' is sensitive and informed for their age, as seen in their discussion and writing about forgiveness, the meaning of the parables and or on choices and consequences. As pupils move through the school there is a corresponding progression in prayer, including the traditional Catholic prayers, and specifically a growing understanding of the structure of the Mass as well as saints' days and the liturgical year.

### b) The quality of the prayer life provided by the school

- The provision for the prayer life of the school is a significant contribution to the spiritual life of the whole school community, and part and parcel of every school day. This is evident not only in the Masses and assemblies reflecting the Church's liturgical year, but also the school's whole environment, with appropriate statues and colourful displays and an attractive prayer garden.
- The centrality of prayer life reaches out to all pupils, regardless of faith or family background, and includes both staff and parents. The parish priest is a frequent

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and encouraging presence for the children and there are strong links between parish and school. Significant moments, such as the May procession, or the attractive mosaic Stations of the Cross in the Nuns Walk, Harvest, Remembrance Day, Advent and Nativity, are celebrated as a whole community and are well supported by parents and parish.

- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of prayer and Catholic liturgy is secure, with progression in the traditional prayers as they get older. They are taken carefully through the structure of the Mass, with pauses to explain the significance of the unfolding liturgy. There are strong prayer links with the parish, particularly during the sacramental preparation programme.
- Pupils' prayer life is further enriched through days on retreat or visits, for example, to Downside Abbey. The chaplaincy day at one of the partnership schools in Swindon was a fruitful and enjoyable experience, and the pupils introduced friendship bracelets to all.

**c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the prayer life of the school.**

- Leaders and governors sustain and nurture the prayer life of the school community well, particularly the chair of governors, and the acting head teacher who ensures provision and opportunities for prayer and collective worship are in place. There are, however, few formal procedures to monitor, evaluate and further enrich prayer life, and there is insufficient written evidence of systematic appraisal in documentation such as the governors' minutes, which might evidence the impact of evaluation on improvement. Such processes would create even more opportunities and variety in worship. Leaders offer models of good practice themselves.
- The spirituality of the staff is well supported through days of training and reflection. They are also supported in planning for worship and becoming more knowledgeable about the liturgical rhythm of the Church, so that they become more confident to model, and then pass on ownership of, the initiating, planning and presenting of liturgies to the pupils themselves. Parents and parishioners are kept informed and engaged with the children by newsletter and by the school's very informative website.

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## Summary of Parental Questionnaires

*'The ethos of the school is welcoming, caring, and inclusive. Children are nurtured to do their best. The school community is strongly linked to the parish'.*

*'St. Joseph's school children grow up caring and compassionate. In the six years we have been involved in the school it's clear that the staff and parents are part of the ethos that makes it happen'.*

*'I chose the school because I wanted my children to have an understanding of the Catholic way of life, and to have this to draw on when they are older Quiet prayer and meditation would be a bonus for the older ones'.*

*'Up until recently I did feel there wasn't enough of a parish - school link but there have been steps taken towards a closer relationship so I believe this will improve'.*

*'St. Joseph's has been a core foundation of the independent, grounded, caring young people that they are growing up to be'.*

*'I am not catholic but I chose this school as I feel the strong Christian values are reflected in every aspect of the school. Distinctive is the kindness, caring, and spirituality which is so important across staff, pupils, and governors'.*