



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Part of the Pope Francis Multi-Academy Company

Fiennes Road, Banbury, OX16 0ET

Inspection dates 23rd – 24th February 2016
Reporting Inspector Joseph Skivington

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Academy primary
Age range of pupils	3 – 11 years
Number on roll	196
Appropriate authority	Board of Directors
Chair of Governors	Mrs Angela Briggs
Telephone number	01295 264284
E-mail address	head.3825@st-josephs-banbury.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	February 2013
DFE School Number	931/3825
Unique Reference Number	141155

Headteacher Ms Clare Smith

Previous inspection: 3

This inspection: 2

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by 1 Diocesan Inspector.
- The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of religious education (RE) and Catholic life.
- To validate the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspector observed seven part RE lessons with senior leaders.
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with governors, including the chair, staff, and parish priest.
- The inspector observed a whole school assembly, a Key Stage 1 assembly, and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school, and pupils' behaviour.
- Other documents such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, learning journals, and the governing body minutes, were read alongside the self evaluation.

Information about the school

- St Joseph's is an average size Catholic primary school, with 196 pupils currently on roll. It became an academy school in 2014 as part of the Pope Francis Multi-Academy Company. The school serves the parish of St Joseph the Worker, Banbury.
- It is in an area of a significant level of social and economic challenges.
- The number of Catholic pupils is currently 111 (57%).
- The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is above average at 62%, as is the proportion of EAL pupils at 45%.
- The number of pupils registered as having special needs and/or disabilities is above average.

Main Findings

- The quality of self evaluation of Catholic life and collective worship is good.
- The quality of self evaluation of RE is good.
- The quality of improvement planning is good.

School self evaluation

Catholic Life and Collective Worship

- The previous inspection of this school found little evidence of procedures for monitoring and evaluating Catholic life or religious education. Since then increasingly effective processes to monitor and review the impact of the provision to promote both Catholic life and RE have been very successfully employed. These robust and searching monitoring procedures feed into the school's self evaluation judgements, and provide a clear and reliable picture of where the school is terms of improvement.
- The school uses a range of measures, particularly reflective enquiry, to judge the impact of its provision. For instance, a specific aspect of Catholic life is selected as a focus each term, with assessment of impact provided by feedback from pupils, parents and staff, and closely overseen by the academy ethics committee. Findings from formal and informal monitoring are fed into the school improvement plan, which is a working document with measurable objectives. This enables it to be reshaped or added to as the targets are realised. Formal, regular questioning of parents and pupils at suitable intervals, such as parent surveys, are becoming more frequent and having greater impact on school improvement.
- The school two years ago was in a parlous state, with serious staffing and leadership issues, instability and poor progress in all subjects including RE. Truly remarkable improvements since January 2014 have been accomplished by an inspiring school leadership which has successfully communicated a clear vision and high expectations in a relatively short time, thereby transforming every aspect of school life. Particularly fruitful use has been made of staff Inset training, including diocesan support, to raise the awareness and quality of Catholic life and to support the staff in improving the quality of teaching and learning in RE.
- The school has not had for some time a more formal revisit of the school mission statement, to enable staff, parents and pupils to re-interpret and reflect on what it means for them. This is being considered and will hopefully involve the pupils' own input and ideas.
- The school is developing more robust ways to enable pupils to make a greater contribution to the evaluation and promotion of Catholic life. Already they have had opportunities through verbal interviews and questionnaires, where their response is valuable and welcomed, to say, for instance, what makes an assembly more meaningful, or if the class altar is used enough to pray and reflect. As a direct result of its monitoring, leadership recognises the need now to give pupils more ownership of the liturgical and prayer life of the school, particularly in the early planning stage of celebrations through the liturgical year. The pupils themselves are excited by the

idea of going a step beyond whole hearted participation to take real ownership and develop the skills of planning and presenting their own assemblies and liturgies.

- Pupils' response to collective worship is outstanding, in terms of willingness to participate, and a real sense of engagement, regardless of faith background or none. A Key Stage 1 assembly during the inspection dramatising the story of Zacchaeus involved pupils acting in costume, and the audience's body language and attentiveness indicated the impact this had. In conversation pupils are excited about the challenging idea that they could contribute even more to the prayer and Catholic life of the school and to take more ownership of it as real animators and leaders.
- Staff are an integral part of the evaluation process with class teachers held responsible for the quality and evaluation of the impact of class collective worship. Teachers who are not fully confident in organising class prayer are given invaluable support from the RE leader with the result that they are not only much more at ease in their own abilities, but also feel able to hand over some planning to their pupils.
- Pupils of all faiths and none are willing and reverent participants in collective worship. All feel included in this open and welcoming community of Faith. The pupils' enthusiastic singing and reverent demeanour in the assemblies during the inspection was exemplary, particularly the careful making of the Sign of the Cross which was modelled carefully by every adult in the hall.

Governance

- Since the last inspection the school has formalised monitoring and evaluation procedures to the extent that governors are now better informed so that their challenges and decision making are the result of a closer, more detailed knowledge of the school.
- The governing body is clearly passionate about, and totally committed to the school and its Catholic ethos. The chair of the governing body and the leader of the Ethos Committee particularly are immensely experienced and challenging, a real asset and strength of the school. Governors are frequent visitors to the school and know staff and pupils well. The minutes of their meetings contain many examples of challenging and probing questions particularly in response to the headteacher's reports but also where the school is in addressing the objectives in the school development plan. Even during the difficult period the school went through, the governors ensured that its special Catholic ethos was held on to and nourished.
- The link governors for RE – the parish priest and the ethos committee chair - have established a close partnership with the RE leader and teachers, with valuable, expert advice. They also enable the governing body to achieve a clear and detailed picture of the subject, to become better informed, and therefore in a position to assess the quality of the RE outcomes, and know how to compare themselves to the other diocesan schools. The parish priest is a frequent and inspiring visitor, and ensures strong, fruitful links are being forged with the parish, and the wider mission of the Church.
- Improvement planning is closely tied in to the evaluation processes, marked by clear priorities, manageable steps, success criteria, and review and reshape intervals. In-

service provision and support material are provided for staff. The subject leader will feed back issues to the RE link governors each term and the whole governing body are provided with a detailed overview of progress against the school improvement plan.

- The governing body meets all the Bishops' Conference requirements fully in terms of RE curriculum and time allotted to the subject.

Religious Education

- Evaluation is founded on the close monitoring of performance, an improving picture which is proof that the processes for review are indeed effective. For instance, after feedback on the quality of learning in lessons, there is now more rigour in preparing lessons. All staff benefitted from a rich RE inset day exploring different strategies to engage pupils in their learning more effectively. Some of these activities were seen in the joint lesson observations, such as hot seating and drama. Examples are videoed and shared with other teachers to develop best practice.
- The school benefits significantly from growing collaboration and valuable peer assessment with the other schools in the academy cluster, particularly in the exchange of best practice and the joint moderation of academic standards over the past year.
- Teaching, which is good overall, is increasingly effective because its impact is monitored and evaluated closely through learning walks and the assessment of progress in learning over time through book scrutiny. All staff are involved now in the evaluation process, for instance, in reviews at the end of each topic to see how learning could be improved. This resulted in one class going back over a topic on the Mass, after weak knowledge and understanding had been identified, and these were subsequently corrected. The monitoring findings are shared with the teachers and fed into the professional development programme and performance targets with real success as demonstrated by the rising standards.
- The marking policy is well embedded and is consistently applied. The quality of the teachers' comments and the pupils' response is work in progress, if it is to become a major driver in raising learning and progress over time to an outstanding level. The regular and frequent assessments enable the teachers to judge more accurately the progress each individual has made. The pupils' response to the formative advice, and its impact on progress over time, would be further enhanced with time set aside for them to reflect on and respond reflectively at some length.
- The teachers' assessment of standards is becoming surer as they gain experience through training, moderation, and building a bank of assessed, moderated pieces of written work for comparison. The school has the support of the other academy cluster schools and schools in the wider North Oxfordshire Catholic Partnership and this will enable RE teachers to group moderate the work of pupils of different ability more accurately.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

- The judgement of good conforms to the school's own evaluation of itself as a good Catholic school.
- Progress and attainment in RE across both key stages is good, the result of good teaching and the excellent behaviour of the children - specifically their behaviour for learning. There is, however, room to improve pupils' progress in learning further, especially to meet the specific learning needs of individual pupils, and further challenge for the more able children.
- The levels of attainment of pupils at the end of both key stages are broadly in line with diocesan expectations. Baseline assessments indicate low prior knowledge and religious experience, but pupils make good and in some cases outstanding progress from Reception through to the end of Key Stage 2, despite a slower pace initially for EAL because of weaker language and literacy skills. These children and those with SEND make similarly good progress due to the extra support from learning assistants, and tailored, differentiated tasks.
- The best learning is achieved through the teachers' high expectations of the quality of pupils' work, higher order questioning which encourages deeper thinking, but also questioning which searches for individual understanding, or to correct misunderstanding. Some outstanding practice was observed during the inspection, particularly at Key Stage 1, and this could be beneficially shared across all years.
- Although behaviour for learning is very positive, the school does recognise the ongoing need to develop independent and peer learning skills, and to provide further challenge especially for the more able in order to achieve outstanding outcomes. Also the need to provide further opportunities to encourage more extended reflective writing especially at Key Stage 2. Pupils' are learning from religion, relating it to their own lives, and their caring behaviour indicates they have internalised the Catholic values of the school, but they also need time and space to reflect on paper at some length and depth.
- The school has ensured that the curriculum is structured around the Curriculum Directory for RE. The translation of the syllabus and schemes of work into lesson plans, with challenging learning objectives more tailored to individual learning needs, as well as building on prior knowledge rather than rehearsing what they know already, is work well advanced. This is particularly important in stretching the more able pupils so that they are challenged to make some real intellectual effort. There is ongoing regular Inset for staff in working out the schemes of work and feedback on impact and how to improve. Staff also have time to pray together and reflect on their vocation of service to the school and its ethos.
- There is a rich provision for collective worship. The liturgies follow and celebrate the Church's year, with school and parish Masses, Reconciliation services in Lent and Advent. Prayer bags during Advent were a great success with pupils and parents and this is continuing throughout the year. The Year 5 pupils enjoyed a day of

¹ As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform to those of the school.

recollection. The sacramental preparation programme is run jointly with the parish catechists and the RE leader. In this, as in all aspects of Catholic life now in the school, a review is held afterwards to reflect on how it could be improved and made even better. Basic knowledge of other faiths is covered through topics assigned to different years. Pupils wholeheartedly become involved in the many opportunities to exercise their generosity in helping others through charities both local and global, such as CAFOD. A further impulse has been the study and practice of the values enshrined in the Catholic pupil profile.

Recommendations

- Enhance learning outcomes, especially for the more able pupils, by employing more higher order questioning in lessons and marking, and by promoting frequent, reflective, extended writing opportunities.
- Involve pupils further in planning and presenting their own liturgies and assemblies, and in taking more ownership of, and responsibility for animating the Catholic life of the school.



March 2nd 2016

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Dear Parents and Carers

Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St. Joseph's. Banbury

I am writing this letter to share with you the findings of the diocesan inspection of your children's school. Diocesan inspection now explores in detail the school's own view of itself as expressed in its self-evaluation. For this reason, much of the report is more technical than used to be the case. You are still entitled to have a copy of the full report should you want one and it will be available on the school website or by request from the school office.

The school has a good, distinctive Catholic ethos which informs all that it does. The inspiring senior leadership and governors have made a remarkable impact on the promotion and sustaining of its Catholic ethos, and on raising standards in RE, based solidly on clear vision and self evaluation which continues to improve even further the now good quality education it provides. Pupils speak very highly of the school and use all the opportunities offered to become involved in their learning and the Catholic life of the school. Their attainment meets expectations well; progress and achievement are good. The pupils enjoy their work in RE immensely and are eager and valued members of the school community. Their response to the excellent provision for collective worship is good. Teaching and purposeful learning in RE is consistently good with some outstanding practice.

I have recommended that the school should provide every opportunity for pupils to be involved in presenting their own liturgies and assemblies, and to take more ownership and responsibility for animating the Catholic life of the school. Also, to challenge pupils even further, particularly the more able, by teachers' questioning more closely in lessons and in marking work, and by promoting frequent, reflective, extended writing opportunities.

I met and talked with many of the pupils, whom I found were invariably welcoming and courteous, and I was very impressed by their outstanding behaviour as well as the valued contribution they make to the school community and their own education. They are a credit to the school and to their families and those who care for them.

It was a pleasure and privilege to inspect St. Joseph's and I wish it every success in its journey to become an outstanding school.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Skivington

Diocesan Inspector



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Diocesan Education Service