Section 48 Inspection Report
DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT (Section 48)
on
THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

School: Joseph’s RC Primary School

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School URN: 111684

Headteacher: Miss Mary Tate

Chair of Governors: Mr Peter Walker

Inspector: Mrs Carole Snee

Date of Inspection: 9 and 10 June 2011

This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Séamus Cunningham, the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese, (c.f. Code Canon Law, 804, 806), and for the Governing Body of the school (Education Act 2005, Section 48). The inspection reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school’s witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school’s own self-evaluation.

The inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Joseph’s is a larger than average primary school. Pupils enter the school from a wide range of economic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than the national average, as is the percentage of pupils from ethnic minority groups. The number of pupils designated as having special educational needs is also below the national average. The school has been oversubscribed for the last four years.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Pupil Catchment:
Number of pupils on roll: 320 (including Nursery)
Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 78%
Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 13%
Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 3%
Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 6%
Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 4%
Percentage of pupils with special needs: 10%

Staffing
Number of full time teachers: 11
Number of part time teachers: 2
Percentage of Catholic teachers: 67%
Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 31%

Percentage of learning time given to Religious Education:
FS 10%     Yr 4 11%
Yr 1 10%     Yr 5 11%
Yr 2 10%     Yr 6 11%
Yr 3 11%

Parishes served by the school:
St Joseph’s, Norton
St Mary’s, Stockton
OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic education

The school’s capacity for sustained improvement

MAIN FINDINGS

St Joseph’s is an outstanding school. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6, they are attaining consistently high standards. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities, especially to support the younger pupils and take an active role in leading and developing the Catholic life of the school. Parents and carers are extremely positive in their praise for the school, which is at the heart of a vibrant parish community. Leaders and managers have made a significant contribution to developing a school that all stakeholders see as overwhelmingly caring. Staff, parents, pupils and governors are justifiably proud to be associated with this school. The school’s capacity for improvement is good. It has effectively prioritised the areas for improvement since the last inspection, but recognises that there is still work to do in ensuring that assessment is used consistently to inform clear targets for Religious Education.

Staff ensure that learning is enjoyable and engages pupils’ interests through the use of high quality strategies such as puppets, role play and group work. As a result, most pupils achieve well and make good progress. School tracking shows that pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities also make good progress. Attainment has been consistently high for at least the last three years, although scrutiny of pupils’ work and conversations with pupils would suggest that some pupils could attain even more highly if they were appropriately challenged. Pupils take an active and willing part in the Catholic life of the school and some pupils can reflect on their faith with great maturity. They respond well to collective worship, showing great reverence and singing to a very high standard. The carefully planned programme for collective worship makes a significant contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils.

Provision for Catholic education is good. The majority of teaching is good, and as a result, pupils enjoy their learning. Progress is good and standards of attainment are high. The school has recently developed a comprehensive tracking system which enables them to track the progress of particular groups of pupils and different cohorts. Assessment is usually used well to plan lessons based on pupils’ prior learning and the school is currently refining its assessment systems even further in order to track progress more closely. The Religious Education curriculum has been enriched with a wide variety of additional resources that make learning more enjoyable for the pupils. The quality of collective worship is outstanding, and older pupils are well prepared to plan and lead their own celebrations.

The headteacher leads the school very well and has a very clear understanding of the strengths of the school and how to build on these. She is skilful at utilising support and challenge from a variety of sources in order to make improvements across the school. The head is very well supported by a conscientious and knowledgeable subject leader, who has a good overview across the school. Together they have a truly shared approach to promoting all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. Governors have been very well supported to
fulfil their role of support and challenge in order to continue the steady pace of improvements. St Joseph’s demonstrates clear commitment to community cohesion through strong partnerships with the local community, welcoming a number of visitors into the school, and enabling their excellent choir to share their talents at performances outside the school. They also work closely with the parish to raise funds to build and support a school in Ghana. This enables the pupils to have a strong understanding of the experiences of pupils from a very different culture.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Ensure that the teaching of Religious Education impacts consistently in all classes by:
  - setting clear expectations for standards, particularly for the most able, in each class
  - clarifying expected progression within each topic, so that each class is clear how their work builds on and further develops the work that has gone before.

- Ensure that all teaching is consistently at least good by:
  - focusing clearly on the learning within each lesson, rather than the activities
  - using open ended questioning to probe and develop pupils’ understanding
PUPILS

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

The majority of pupils enter the school with skills and knowledge broadly in line with those expected of pupils their age. By the end of Year 2, most of them are achieving above average standards, with some attaining higher. By the time the pupils leave school, at the end of Year 6, most of them are achieving at least above average standards, with a number attaining even more highly. Lesson observations during the inspection and conversations with pupils would indicate however, that even more pupils were capable of reaching the higher standards, if sufficiently challenged. School tracking showed that pupils with additional learning needs were making good progress and overall, there was little difference in the progress of boys and girls, although a gender gap had been identified in some cohorts, with boys achieving less than girls. Standards have remained consistently high over recent years. Pupils have a very positive attitude to their learning, and work very well together on shared tasks. Their behaviour is exemplary at all times and they make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They have a clear understanding of how the teachings of Jesus can influence their own lives. Pupils enjoy having extra responsibilities, such as supporting the youngest pupils and are conscientious in carrying them out. Without exception, every child talked to during the inspection was proud to be a pupil at St Joseph’s. The school recognises that most of its pupils share a similar White British background, but it explicitly plans discussions and opportunities for the pupils to experience relationships with those from different backgrounds, faiths and cultures.

Pupils’ response to collective worship is outstanding. They are very attentive and reverent, entering the hall for whole school collective worship with hands joined to indicate that they are about to partake in something very special. The school is developing ways of increasing pupils’ participation in collective worship, for example through ‘candle times’. These are very much appreciated by both parents and pupils. Even the very youngest pupils respond really well to the thoughtfully planned opportunities for prayer and celebration. There is a clear programme to develop the skills of the pupils in planning and leading prayer and worship both within their own classes and for the whole school. Assemblies are used very well to contribute to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils, such as in the link with American pupils discussing their understanding of rules.
PROVISION

How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education

The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers plan thoroughly for Religious Education lessons, although there are times when there is insufficient differentiation to challenge all of the pupils, particularly the more able. Teachers work hard to ensure that lessons are interesting, with activities that are imaginative, such as the videos of pupils ‘captured’ obeying school rules. Good use is made of time. Pupils are kept interested because teachers are skilful at using a range of strategies to engage them, such as partner and group work. ICT is used well to support both teaching and learning. Some teachers use feedback in marking well to ensure that pupils are clear about the steps they need to take to improve their learning. Pupils with additional needs are very well supported by skilled and conscientious teaching assistants.

The school has recently begun to use a comprehensive tracking system to allow individual pupils’ progress to be monitored and evaluated. Work is regularly and rigorously moderated, both in school, at Diocesan moderation meetings and with other schools to ensure that assessments are accurate. The school is currently being proactive in moving towards an assessment system that will inform clearer and more personalised targets for improvement for each pupil. Most teachers are beginning to use marking well to signpost next steps in pupils’ learning and some are enabling pupils to respond to their marking and demonstrate their improvements.

The school provides a good Religious Education curriculum. It is enriched with a wide variety of resources, ensuring that it is accurately matched to the needs of the pupils of St Joseph’s. Planning is monitored to ensure that there is full coverage of the Religious Education programme and it meets the requirements of the Bishops’ Conference well. The school is constantly looking at ways in which the curriculum can be improved, so that it builds upon pupils’ prior experiences and has made a significant investment in recently purchased resources. It is outward looking in its pursuit of excellence, and has collaborated with other schools in order to search out new curriculum developments. As a result, pupils are well supported to develop both spiritually and morally through an appropriate and meaningful curriculum.

The quality of collective worship offered is generally outstanding. It is carefully planned to meet the particular needs of the pupils of St Joseph’s. There is a strong focus on a range of spiritual themes and there are explicit links with the liturgical year. There is a clear progression in prayer methods and styles. Pupils are kept engaged and challenged by some very thoughtful discussions that serve to probe and deepen their understanding of their faith. Pupils take an active part in leading aspects of their collective worship, and the school has clear plans in place to develop this further. Parents and carers are very appreciative of the efforts the school makes to include them in the varying opportunities for Collective worship.
LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School

Senior leaders in the school have a very clear vision for the continuing development of St Joseph’s as a very caring community, deeply rooted in the Catholic faith and at the centre of a vibrant parish community. The tightly focused improvement plan has clear priorities, and time limited actions. The conscientious subject leader has a clear grasp of the school’s areas for development and, together with the headteacher, they have focused on a range of in-service and external training to support all staff in their understanding of and commitment to the Church’s mission in education. As a result, all staff share in and promote the vision for the Catholic life of the school.

The school has a systematic programme of monitoring for Religious Education, taking into account not just written data, but also the views of the pupils and a rigorous schedule of lesson observations and work scrutinies. As a result, most weaknesses identified are swiftly tackled and eradicated. Assessments are cross moderated to ensure accuracy, and the headteacher has also been proactive in inviting external monitoring to challenge their evaluations of their provision. The school, therefore, has a very clear and accurate overview of strengths and areas for development. The subject leader uses her expertise to support staff with a range of well chosen strategies. Consequently, outcomes for almost all pupils are at least good.

The governors make a highly significant contribution to the work and the Catholic dimension of the school. They are extremely well led by a very knowledgeable chair and together with a very active governing body they support and challenge the school to continuously improve their provision. The governors are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and engage very effectively with staff, parents and pupils in order to obtain an accurate picture. They discharge their statutory and canonical duties well and have a good understanding of their role in holding the school to account.

Leaders and managers of the school have made excellent use of a variety of partnerships to support improvements in pupils’ learning and well-being. They have made links with other outstanding schools in order to identify examples of best practice and this has had a significant impact on the quality of provision for collective worship and the rigour of monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education. Excellent use has also been made of external providers of support for the development of the Catholic ethos and mission of the school, in a professional development day for all staff and governors. This enabled all those involved to have the opportunity to contribute to the vision for the school’s continuing pursuit of excellence. The school also makes excellent use of visitors from the community and from different faiths, as well as visits to a number of different places of worship such as a synagogue in Newcastle and a mosque in Hartlepool, to enrich the learning opportunities for the pupils.

Community cohesion is promoted extremely well by all leaders and managers. There is a strong sense amongst all of the adults and particularly the older pupils, of belonging to a Catholic community. The pupils are very clear about the similarities and differences which exist between Christianity, Judaism and Islam, and speak of them with respect. Pupils are well equipped with skills such as co-operation and teamwork to respond positively to each other and to others in their neighbourhood. They work towards the common good by involvement in a number of fundraising activities and through a close link with a school in
Ghana. The school recognises that as most pupils are of White British origin, there is a need to provide even more opportunities for them to encounter people from different faiths and cultures.
### SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

**Key for inspection grades:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall effectiveness</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The school’s capacity for sustained improvement</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>- how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>- the quality of pupils’ learning and their progress</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>- the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>- pupils’ standards of attainment in Religious Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>- the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>- how well pupils respond to and participate in the school’s collective worship</td>
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<td><strong>How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>- the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>- the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils’ needs</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>- the quality of collective worship provided by the school</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>- how well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>- how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>- the extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met</td>
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<td>- how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well-being</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>- how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion.</td>
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