



## INSPECTION REPORT

### **St Joseph's Catholic Primary School**

Holloway Hill, Malmesbury, Wiltshire SN16 9BB

Telephone: 01666 822331

e-mail address: [admin@st-josephs-malmesbury.wilts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@st-josephs-malmesbury.wilts.sch.uk)

URN: 126424

Headteacher: Mrs Christopher

Chair of Governors: Mrs Birkin-Hewitt

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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: 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> May  
Date of previous inspection: 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> March 2008  
Reporting Inspector: Mrs A Fowler

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## Description of School

St Joseph's is a smaller than average Catholic Primary school which draws the majority of its intake from the parish of St Aldhelms. Approximately 61% of the school are Catholic. The majority of pupils are from a white British background. The proportion of pupil's supported by school action or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school enjoys excellent relationships with the parish and enjoys strong support from parents.

### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding;    Grade 2: Good;    Grade 3: Satisfactory;    Grade 4: Unsatisfactory

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## Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

### Grade 2

St Joseph's is a good school with outstanding elements. Its Catholicity is central to its mission with the head teacher and governors committed to promoting and developing the ethos of the school. Pupils and staff are proud of the school. The local parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and helps ensure that relationships between school and parish are good.

Pupils and parents value the school and feel welcomed within the community. Parents actively choose the school both for its Catholic identity and for its family feel. One parent commenting *"it has wonderful core values and is like being part of a family."* Another parent said *"The parents are encouraged to play an active role in the school which makes you feel included"* This comment was typical of the parental view that the school strove for an inclusive approach to education. Pupils' moral and spiritual development is excellent. Throughout the inspection pupils behaved impeccably and demonstrated their commitment to supporting each other and working to the best of their ability. Pupils said that they liked coming to school, enjoyed learning and felt valued. They spoke about the responsibility we all have to respond to the needs of others in the wider community. They understand their mission statement and knew what it meant to try to live this in practice.

### The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

#### Grade 1

The Capacity of the school to improve is outstanding for the following reasons:

- The commitment of the pupils, who seek to do their very best, and are extremely supportive of the school and its ethos
- The commitment of the head teacher, RE coordinator, governors and parish priest who provide inspiring leadership and are putting strategies in place to further develop the ethos of the school and improve the learning.
- The school has already identified the areas needed to drive forward the learning in Religious Education and is prepared to commit time and resources to making sure this improvement takes place

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

- Develop the assessment programme in RE, (including assessment for learning) so that the school has a more accurate picture of pupils level of attainment and pupils are able to accurately self-assess their own work
- Ensure that all planning in RE is linked to the levels of attainment
- Further develop the role of pupils in leading and planning prayer and worship.

**How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?****Grade 2**

Pupils are exceptionally proud of their school and regard it as a safe and welcoming place. They are keen to participate and take responsibility and are offered opportunities to do so. They clearly understand their mission statement and can interpret this for their own lives in terms of their behaviour. The introduction of the "Footsteps award" has not only increased pupils' awareness of the mission statement but allowed them opportunities to both articulate its meaning and value behaviour and actions which express the lived experience of the mission statement. Pupils believe that they have a real say in how the school is run citing the school council as an example of the fact that they were given responsibilities. Even the youngest member of the council felt their views really mattered. Older pupils are aware of the need to set an example to younger pupils and to actively help them. Pupils are aware of the needs of others outside the school community and respond generously; through their actions they demonstrate their commitment to justice. All of the pupils encountered during the inspection were able to express their own views with confidence and believed that the school valued them as individuals. When asked to talk about the distinctiveness of the school they knew that the school was a praying community centred on Christ. They were aware of the meaning of religious artefacts and showed respect for their environment. They understood the role of the priest and the connection of the school to both parish and diocese.

Pupils' response to the prayer life of the school was reverent and reflective and at the appropriate times, joyful. They knew and responded to the basic prayers of the church, their school prayer and their school hymn. The use of music and ICT to enhance the school's prayer life was clearly demonstrated in the assemblies and reflections seen during the inspection. Pupils welcomed the opportunity to be involved and engaged. The school has created a "stations of the resurrection trail" in the grounds which outlines key events after the resurrection of Jesus. Older pupils lead younger pupils on this trail and during the inspection two older pupils led a group of three younger students with extraordinary confidence. They explained the stations to the younger pupils, asked intelligent questions and encouraged them to pause and reflect. This encouragement to take on a leadership role clearly impacts on the understanding pupils have of what it means to be a person of prayer. Not all pupils however were benefitting equally. Some staff were far less confident in allowing pupils to either lead prayer or express their views and questions. In these cases prayer became a bolt on to the lesson and was not successful in integrating reflection into the life of the school. Pupils were enthusiastic about going to mass and were confident in making the responses. Because

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members of the parish attend the mass (which normally takes place within the parish church) pupils were able to make connections between the life of the school, the life of the parish and the Church's year. Although younger pupils understanding of the mass was well developed for their age, (helped by the priest who often explains elements of the liturgy as he goes through the mass) older pupils were less secure in further developing themes within liturgy and some thought needs to be given about how this can be made more explicit in RE lessons.

Pupils respond positively to their experiences in religious education, they are interested and enthusiastic about their learning. In key stage one their level of response to oral questions is above average; one year two pupil for example engaging in a discussion about how we should look for meaning in the creation story. Pupils have a good understanding of Bible stories and are aware of the meaning of parables and able to connect them to their own lives. Younger pupils especially show a developing understanding of religious language and are able to use it in a meaningful way. Pupils were less secure in the knowledge of some other aspects of Catholic belief. Although they could name all the sacraments they were less certain about meaning. The new syllabus should over time correct these imbalances.

## **How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?**

### **Grade 2**

Prayer is central to the life of the school and there are a range of opportunities, both formal and informal, offered to pupils to take part in different prayer activities. The school celebrates the Eucharist on a weekly basis normally in the Parish church. There are services of reconciliation as well as special services reflecting the pattern of the church's year. The outside space is well utilised in creating prayer spaces with pupils recently experiencing both the Stations of the Cross trails and resurrection trails. Leadership by pupils is encouraged. For the Stations of the Cross for example pupils designed the visual images, reflected on what it meant to them and wrote their own prayers. Focal areas for prayer are present in all classrooms though these are not all of the same quality. Where they are at their best they are highly visible within the classroom, make a connection with the Church's year, offer opportunities to respond and provide good visual stimuli. Images of faith around the school are linked to questions to encourage pupils to reflect on what they are seeing. Links with the parish and priest are excellent. Pupils from the school animate the parish mass on a regular basis. The school has an extremely good choir and the pupils respond joyfully to the opportunities to sing in mass. The music is often linked to actions to reinforce meaning which means even the youngest pupils can take part. Parents are encouraged to attend liturgies and assemblies. These events mean pupils have a good understanding of the Church's year and how it connects to events in the life of Jesus.. Reflections are built into RE lessons though the quality of these reflections can vary.

The Bishops' Conference requirements for the time allocated to RE are fulfilled. The school has recently decided to adopt a new syllabus, 'God Matters' Although it is too soon to provide a full evaluation early results are encouraging. Pupils are highly motivated by their work and respond enthusiastically to challenges. Pupils were extremely positive about their experiences in RE though older pupils expressed the view that they wanted more depth and greater challenge. Teaching is not consistent through

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all years. Where teaching is good or outstanding planning is linked to the levels of attainment, outcomes are clearly stated and pupils are encouraged to be reflective learners assessing their own work. Where teaching is less secure the outcomes are not clear and the tasks set fail to give pupils the opportunities to reach the higher levels. In the lessons observed opportunities were provided for pupils to work in pairs and in groups and pupils responded well to this and were always on task, even the youngest pupils. Their behaviour was always excellent. IT within religious education is embedded into the lessons and often helped to provide a focus. Teachers and support staff work well together to support pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge was variable and this means that occasionally the opportunity to develop a theological point was missed. Pupils who had special educational needs were well supported. Pupils were making progress especially in key stage one but progress could be further strengthened firstly by identifying tasks for older pupils that are more evaluative in nature and secondly by ensuring planning is clearly linked to the driver words used in the levels of attainment. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. A relationship programme incorporating sex education is in place although the school might wish to hold meetings with parents to explain the syllabus and how it will work.

Marking takes place on a regular basis however there is inconsistency within the marking with all teachers needing to be clearer about steps for improvement and making sure time is provided for pupils to respond to comments. Staff need to make more use of self-assessment techniques including success criteria and modelling. Assessment is not well developed, staff are uncertain about implementing the levels of attainment and how this might find expression in terms of pupil work; as a consequence data on pupil progress is unreliable and is not yet being used effectively.

## **How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic Life of the school?**

### **Grade 1**

Leadership and management are clearly committed to promoting the Catholic life of the school.

All Bishops Conference requirements are fulfilled with the school devoting at least one inset day per year to the Catholic Ethos. The Catholic ethos of the school is seen as central to all that the school does and this is reflected in the school development plan. Policies are regularly reviewed to ensure that they work effectively. For example following review a new child friendly version of the Mission Statement was introduced in September 2011. Parents are given opportunities to express feelings about the school which enables them to feel part of the school and to appreciate that their views are valued. The Head teacher and the RE co-ordinator are committed to planning improvements to outcomes for pupils. The new RE coordinator has begun, with the Head teacher, a process of monitoring lessons, conducting book trawls and asking for pupils' views. Her observations are accurate and this process of self-evaluation will impact on pupil learning. The Head reports to the full governing body and thus acts as a source of information for the governors to help them monitor the Catholic life of the school. The RE coordinator also now reports on a termly basis to Governors on specific aspects of Re and the religious life of the school. Governors are frequent visitors to the

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school and therefore gain information first hand. The Governors have formed a Mission, Vision and Ethos group which regularly reviews and develops the Catholic life of the school. Governors have an excellent grasp of the strengths, weakness and challenges that the school faces. Links with the diocese and the local partnership of other Catholic schools are good. At present the link governor for RE is the parish priest. He is extremely proactive in this role and his support enables staff to increase their subject knowledge. There is a strong mutually supportive relationship with the parish.

The school's mission statement reflects the common sense of belonging and is lived out within the school. Relationships within the school community are excellent. Pupils are encouraged to support a variety of charities both at local and international level, including, amongst many others, Cafod, Shelter and Mission Together. The school currently hold the Full International award. This award which comes from the British Council is given to schools that can demonstrate their pupils taking social action to tackle global issues.

Working towards the full award involves working collaboratively with schools in other countries on joint projects. Teachers will have embedded international learning in the curriculum and global themes into teaching. The school promotes an understanding of, and respect for, other faiths and cultures through specific teaching in RE programmes and through days and activities raising awareness. The school has links with other Catholic schools within the area partnership group; this includes sharing good practice and running joint curriculum days. This area is being strengthened. The school also works with other schools within the local area and supports specific social and cultural events; for example Children visited the local residential homes for the elderly to sing Christmas carols.