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DIOCESAN BOARD FOR INSPECTIONS

SECTION 48 FINAL REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Newgate, Pontefract. WF81NL

School URN	108265
School DfE Number	3843333
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Chair of Governors	Mr. Mark Wheatley
Headteacher	Mr. Darren Redfern
RE Subject Leader	Mrs. Emma Everett
Date of Inspection	24 th and 25 th April 2012
Section 48 Inspector	Mr. David Gott

INTRODUCTION

The Inspection of St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School Pontefract was carried out by one Inspector over one and a half days under the requirements of Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 and Leeds Diocesan Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Bishop of Leeds. The Inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process starts with the school's own self evaluation. The Inspection follows the schedule and criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisors (NIBRIA).

A sample of 6 Religious Education (RE) lessons and 5 acts of Collective Worship (CW) were observed covering all three key stages. In addition 1 whole school Easter liturgical celebration was also observed. Meetings were held with the headteacher, RE subject leader, vice chair of governors and representative groups of pupils and parents. A wide range of RE/Catholic Life of the school documentation was scrutinised - including RE budget allocation, minutes of governor meetings, RE policy documents, School Development Plan (SDP), RE subject manager monitoring and assessment files and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) records. Pupil progress tracking records, home/school/parish newsletters, school website/prospectus and a representative sample of pupil RE workbooks were also scrutinised.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Joseph's Catholic School Pontefract is a very safe, oversubscribed, average-sized, one form entry Voluntary Aided school of the Diocese of Leeds. The school is located close to the town centre, immediately adjacent to the Parish Church of St. Joseph. The parish was recently reconfigured and now incorporates a chapel of ease at St. Michael's, Knottingley.

The school has a long and proud Catholic history. The Jesuits established a school and chapel here in 1685. The current church dates from 1806 and a school was built in 1856 – the original bell of which still hangs in the main entrance way of the current modernised school buildings. A nursery and extra classroom block were added in 1994.

More recently considerable improvements to the overall learning environment of the school have taken place – particularly the new addition of an outdoor children's play area and raised vegetable gardens. Further building improvements are planned, most notably an extension to the main school and outdoor play area hall on the footprint of the soon to be demolished old church hall.

The current Headteacher was appointed in 2006. The current RE subject leader has held this responsibility for 14 years. Currently 214 pupils are on roll (excluding a 52 place flexible part time lower foundation/nursery unit). The school/parish also has an active parent/toddler group. The school organises a very popular before school 'Breakfast Club' and a wide variety of after school clubs.

Within the main school 87.88 % pupils are Catholic. There is a rising trend of Catholic pupils joining the school. Currently all upper foundation/reception places are filled by Catholic pupils. There are 7 classes within the main school and all pupils are taught in single age classes. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is around average, as is the proportion for whom English is a second language. Similarly the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around average.

The school has a teaching staff of 7 full time and 5 part time teachers (10 full time equivalent). Ten teachers are Catholic. Three teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS) or equivalent. No staff are currently undertaking CCRS. Three members of staff have recently successfully completed the Diocese of Leeds RE Programme: 'Catholic Foundation Stones'- which was led by the school's headteacher.

The school is an active member of the Wakefield Partnership of Catholic Schools. The school also belongs to St. Wilfrid's Catholic High School Featherstone pyramid - to which the majority of Year 6 pupils transfer for their secondary education. At the time of the inspection, the Wakefield Catholic partnership was actively consulting on academy status for all their family of schools.

The school has achieved several nationally recognised awards including 'Investors In People' (10 year award), 'Healthy School Award', 'International School Award', and 'Sportsmark'. The school is currently working towards 'Artsmark' and in order to further enhance 'pupil voice', the school also plans to achieve 'Investors in Pupils' status.

"St. Joseph's is such a happy family school, I always look forward to coming in to school special assemblies." (Parent comment)

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection Grades: 1 is Outstanding, 2 is Good, 3 is Satisfactory, 4 is Inadequate

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

1

This is a summative judgement based on the 2 judgements below: Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils, provision for Catholic education (includes effectiveness of leaders and managers) and capacity for sustained improvement.

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS, PROVISION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

1

CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT

1

Main findings

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School provides an outstanding quality of Catholic education. All associated with the school work hard on a daily basis to live out the school's Mission Statement of: *'Nurturing the God given talents and gifts of each member of our school family..... and challenging each other to learn together so we can become faithful, responsible and respectful members of our global community.'*

Outcomes for pupils, the provision for Catholic education, including the effectiveness of leaders and managers and the school's capacity for sustained improvement are at least good with both judged to be outstanding. The pursuit of excellence in Catholic education, has led to exceptional improvement. The senior leadership team including governors and RE subject leader, inspire the whole school community towards achieving their ambitious vision for the school. Morale is very high and belief in the school's success runs

throughout all levels of staff. The school has worked hard to successfully address the issues identified for improvement in the previous RE Inspection.

St. Joseph's is a school which knows itself very well. The school's self evaluation systems of the Catholic Life of the school and RE are very accurate and enable the leadership and management of the school to very effectively identify current strengths and prioritise areas for further RE development. The school has already published a very detailed School Development Plan to 'signpost' routes towards achieving these ambitious improvements.

St. Joseph's is a school where every child and every member of staff really does matter-where safeguarding spiritual wellbeing, enjoyment, achievement, tolerance, respect and dignity for all are actively promoted in the day to day life of the school and where all are challenged to be as good as they possibly can be.

"I love learning about Jesus." (Pupil comment)

What the school needs to do to improve further

- In conjunction with the Wakefield Partnership of Catholic Schools and appropriate diocesan advice and support, continue to further develop and refine the termly innovative pupil RE attainment data collection and analysis system which the school has recently devised.
- Target the higher attaining pupils to ensure that RE achievement levels are more consistently achieved across all key stages and are more in line with other core curriculum, attainment levels –particularly reading and writing.
- Through on going CPD provision, continue to further embed and enhance staff confidence and expertise in the accurate identification and use of the Levels of Attainment in RE. Similarly further develop on going staff confidence in the appropriate use of individual pupil target setting linked to the above and apply it to the recently introduced RE scheme: 'The Way, The Truth and The Life'.
- Similarly following the recent introduction by the Diocese of Leeds of an approved EPR programme: 'In The Beginning' ensure that through appropriate CPD all staff become fully familiar with and confident in the use of the teaching materials and that governors and parents are kept fully informed about the implementation of the programme within school.
- In order to further promote individual spiritual development and closer home/school/parish links, consider building upon the school's existing success in delivering the Diocese of Leeds RE initiative: 'Catholic Foundation Stones'. By further inviting interested staff, parents and parishioners who may wish to learn more about the Catholic faith, by taking part in the course workshops, all may come to a deeper understanding and practice of their faith.
- Within the planned building remodelling work to extend the current school hall, consider creating the additional provision of a simple prayer room to further enhance the RE learning environment for pupils –particularly during Collective Worship and Circle Times. In this way high quality liturgical reflections could take place without the distractions of a busy school hall. Similarly seasonal liturgical artefacts, displays and provision for background music/digital projection of RE images could remain in situ.

"We like getting the 'Wednesday Word' and the school newsletters." (Parent comment)

PUPILS

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

1

*"I felt proud to receive a 'Star Award' in assembly for good spiritual responses in RE."
(Pupil comment)*

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils taking particular account of variations between different groups is outstanding. The quality of pupils' learning and their progress in RE for most groups of pupils is at least good in each key stage for different groups and is exemplary in some. Most pupils concentrate very well and are rarely off task even in extended periods without direction from an adult. Pupils are keen to succeed and readily avail themselves of extension challenges in RE to undertake independent research and other self-initiated projects both in school and at home.

In observed upper and lower Foundation Key Stage (FKS) classes, children were celebrating 'The Joys of Easter'. Key words such as happy, joy, smile, Easter Sunday, Jesus, Mary, and Peter were explored with the help of skilful questioning. Children played 'the smile game' where a child asks the child next to them what makes them smile! Additional visual images from the Easter story were displayed on the interactive whiteboard. Children enjoyed taking part in a wide range of well planned free flow activities helping the children to celebrate 'The joys of Easter'. The children variously planted seeds, drew happy faces with large chinks, used play dough mats with Easter story colour picture overlays, created an Easter dance using coloured swirling ribbons and used costumes to act out parts of the Easter story.

In a lower Key Stage 1 class exploring the Easter story, a pupil was able to say: "Jesus came back alive on Easter Sunday."

Similarly, in exploring the signs and symbols of Easter, another child said, "The candle light reminds me that Jesus came back to life on Easter Sunday."

Pupils particularly enjoyed decorating attractive, paper crosses using brightly coloured gratings from wax crayons which teaching assistants ironed on to pre-cut paper crosses.

An upper Key Stage 1 class beginning to explore the RE theme Pentecost engaged in very lively discussions surrounding the signs and symbols of the Holy Spirit. In the concluding CW pupils read a prayer, "Your Holy Spirit is like a flame that gives light to our hearts. May your flame light our path and guide us towards peace."

To which all the pupils responded, "Generous God, pour out your love on us."

The CW concluded with enthusiastic singing and signing of the song 'You raise me up!' to which the class teacher had very skilfully selected and coordinated appropriate visual digital images to match the words which greatly added impact to the quality of the worship.

A lower Key Stage 2 class was studying 'The Good Shepherd', and in particular exploring how Jesus choose Peter to lead His disciples and 'spread the Good News'. The pupils further explored how Peter might have been feeling and how we can all 'spread the good news about Easter'. An upper KS2 class enjoyed exploring their feelings in a 'Circle time' focused upon Pentecost – and how the apostles might have been feeling. The pupils were very well versed in the ground rules for circle time and they were at ease, respectfully listening and actively contributing to the discussions and activities the class teacher had skilfully planned. Particular successes and achievements of pupils were celebrated.

The quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress is excellent in all or most respects. The school has implemented a number of very successful intervention strategies which have enabled pupils to achieve in line with national expectations for pupils of their age.

Pupils' standards of attainment for the final key stage in RE are mostly above-average. Pupils are attaining generally above-average standards in both Attainment Target 1 (Learning about Religion) and Attainment Target 2 (Learning from Religion) in all key stages. Pupils are able to describe and show understanding of links between them. Pupils are able to describe and show understanding of religions sources, beliefs, ideas, feelings and experiences, making links between them. Pupils also show understanding of how religious belief can shape their lives. Similarly pupils show how their own and others' decisions are informed by beliefs and values.

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. Pupils are proud of their school, of their beliefs and of their family's heritage. They have a strong sense of personal worth. They are keen to lead and take responsibility for shaping activities with a religious character both in school and in the wider community. They take full advantage of the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development and evaluating the Catholic Life of the School.

Pupils are prepared for First Sacraments through the parish. The school and parish community play a vital role in supporting the Parish Priest, Catechist, pupils and their families in their preparations.

In proportion to their years pupils show a vibrant capacity for community praise and celebration, an ability to listen, to give thanks, to forgive and to be forgiven. They express their own views and beliefs with confidence and are able to refer to the teachings of Jesus and other key religious figures. They value and respect the long Catholic heritage and tradition of the school and its links with the wider parish community. Pupils try to live out the school Mission Statement in their day to day classroom lives. They treat others with high levels of respect and know acutely that their behaviour always has consequences. Pupils at St. Joseph's are alert to the needs of others and seek justice for all within and beyond the immediate school community. They are quick to celebrate the success of others.

The extent to which pupils at St. Joseph's respond to and participate in the school's CW is outstanding. Pupils regularly prepare and lead worship with confidence and enthusiasm from their earliest years in a variety of gatherings. They are skilled in using a variety of ways and means (including ICT) to support their private and public prayer. They are at ease and act with integrity when praying with others who have different beliefs and attitudes to spirituality. They distinguish between the spiritual and material, recognising that God plays an important part in their lives. They are capable of making strong positive moral decisions and acting upon them.

Upper KS2 pupils particularly enjoy being actively involved in the planning, preparation and delivery of class based 'Peer Worship', where by, on a voluntary basis, groups of pupils produce the Collective Worship for the class. The standard of pupil ICT RE skills witnessed was of a particularly high standard and greatly contributed to the overall impact of the particular CW. Pupils led some thought provoking discussions on how we can all follow Jesus in the way we choose to live our lives. Pupils are encouraged to be open about their thoughts and feelings and are invited to record them in the class prayer book or

their own Worship Journal if they wish to do so. The CW concluded with the very lively singing of the hymn chosen by the pupils: 'Follow me, Follow me'.

“As a school councillor, I enjoy having to identify a pupil who has been particularly helpful in the playground at break times, like cheering up someone who was sad. The Headteacher then presents a surprise letter of thanks to that pupil in the weekly ‘Star Awards’ assembly. It gives me a good feeling.” (Pupil comment)

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	1
Taking into account:	
• the quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	1
• the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
• pupils’ attainment 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.	1

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic education.

1

Provision for Catholic education at St. Joseph’s is outstanding. Teaching is at least good and much is outstanding, with the result that the pupils are making exceptional progress. It is highly effective in inspiring pupils and ensuring that they learn extremely well. Excellent teacher RE subject knowledge is applied consistently to challenge and inspire pupils and ensure they make exceptional progress as learners in RE. Teachers and other adults are aware of their pupils’ capabilities and of their prior learning and understanding, and plan very effectively to build on these.

Governors have approved an RE budget of £1500 for the current financial year. This is in line with the previous year’s allocation and is slightly more than allocated to other core curriculum areas. These funds have been used to purchase the new RE Scheme ‘The Way, The Truth and The Life’ and a new EPR programme ‘In the Beginning’ and to support linked CPD training.

High quality resources, including technology are used very effectively, together with the targeted support provided by other adults, to optimise learning. Consequently, pupils are highly motivated, sustain their concentration extremely well and enjoy their work. Marking and dialogue between teachers, other adults and pupils are consistently of a very high quality. Pupils understand in detail how to improve their work and are consistently supported in doing so. Teachers systematically and effectively check pupils’ understanding throughout RE lessons, anticipating where they may need to intervene and doing so with striking impact on the quality of learning.

The RE curriculum fully meets Bishops’ Conference requirements and is responsive to diocesan circumstances and guidance. It effectively provides pupils with a deep insight into their Catholic faith and helps pupils see it in relation to other World faiths.

It successfully seeks to improve on the coherence, relevance and excitement of the well planned opportunities provided. As a result, pupils have the opportunity to be enthusiastic and highly motivated learners and benefit from excellent opportunities to improve their spiritual and moral development.

The school makes good provision for high quality, appropriately differentiated, liturgical displays, signs, symbols and religious artefacts, all of which are highly visible throughout the school and strongly communicate and confirm the importance the school gives to publicly proclaiming and celebrating The Catholic Life of the school. External school signage clearly proclaims the presence of St. Joseph's Catholic School in the local community. Upon entering the main reception area, an attractive pupil display celebrating St. Joseph, is clearly visible. Brief details of information about the school's patron saint, inform visitors and parents. Similarly, a digital TV screen scrolls through an attractive video programme of events and information about the school. This includes various RE seasonal liturgical celebrations and the school Mission Statement. In line with other core curriculum areas, each classroom contains a designated RE focal area with seasonal liturgically appropriate RE artefacts and examples of pupils work. In a lower KS1 class, this display also included not only the pupils own prayer folder, but also one specially prepared and presented to the class by Year 5 pupils.

The school's RE curriculum builds upon pupils' very variable RE baseline upon entry into the school and skilfully modifies the curriculum where necessary to meet the needs of individual and groups of pupils. The school is also proactive in collaborating with other schools and organisations in looking forward to the next stage of their RE development. Strong and productive links exist between St. Joseph's Primary School and St. Wilfrid's High School.

Pupils' liturgical formation is well planned, appropriate to their faith backgrounds and shows progression. The themes, chosen by pupils and staff, reflect a deep understanding of the Church's mission and include the spiritual aspirations of all pupils. Pupils with different religious beliefs are assisted and supported in their prayer rituals.

The school is alert to the needs of others and seek justice for all within and beyond the school community. The school has also recently commenced staff training with regard to introduction of the 'Rainbows Programme' which assists children who have suffered bereavement of a close family member.

Through the school council pupils particularly enjoy fundraising in support of various charities such as the local hospice, CAFOD, Catholic Care (Good Shepherd Fund). Pupils also enjoy taking part in themed weeks e.g. 'Water Week', 'Prayer Week', 'Live Simply Week' and 'Global Week'. The school has established a number of international links including links with schools in China and Gambia.

Collective Worship is central to the life of the school and a key part of every school celebration. Prayer opportunities for staff and pupils are planned in a manner that attracts and facilitates attendance including adults associated with the pupils and school. The whole school Easter celebration liturgy 'Risen and Alive' (especially directed by the school's visiting part time music teacher) witnessed during the inspection took place in the church and was extremely well attended by parents and other family members. The pupils' vibrant singing, dancing, readings, drama and instrumental music accompaniment truly celebrated the Easter message:

‘Risen and alive, Jesus is risen and alive
 He showed himself to his disciples who spread the news around the land
 That they had seen him and touched his hand
 Tell it to the world, tell it to the world, tell it to the world.
 Risen and alive! Jesus is risen and alive
 Risen and alive! Jesus is risen and alive’.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching in Religious Education.	1
The use of assessment to support learning in Religious Education.	1
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils’ needs.	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.	1

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

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

1

The extent to which the leaders and managers of St. Joseph’s, develop the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. The school’s Governing Body, Headteacher, RE Subject Leader and whole leadership team is deeply committed to the Church’s mission in education. They are energised by the task and are a source of inspiration for the whole community. There is unequivocal and explicit evidence that the Catholic mission of the school is a priority along with the spiritual and moral development of pupils. This is reflected in the School Development Plan, self-evaluation form and other documents. Self evaluation at all levels within the school is a coherent reflection of rigorous monitoring, searching analysis and self challenge. This leads on to well targeted planning and actions taken by the school often creatively conceived with key partners (such as the newly devised, innovative, termly pupil progress RE data tracking system developed by the Headteacher). As a result pupils have highly sophisticated understanding of the school’s mission, share its purpose and are keenly involved in shaping and supporting it.

Provision for staff and governor induction and on going CPD in RE is high at this school. A number of staff (not all of the Catholic faith) have been supported by the school to successfully complete the Diocese of Leeds RE development programme: ‘Catholic Foundation Stones’. Staff commented how much they had valued this experience. The RE subject leader conscientiously attends regular diocesan cluster meetings and RE courses/meetings at Hinsley Hall and Leeds Trinity University College and feeds back all relevant information to the school.

Governors make a highly significant contribution to the work and the Catholic dimension of the school. They have high levels of expertise, are extremely well organised and thorough in their approach. They act as ‘critical friend’ to the senior management of the school. In discharging their statutory and canonical responsibilities, they have highly robust systems for evaluating the effectiveness of their implementation, keeping the work of the school under review and acting upon their findings. Governors are innovative, flexible and adapt to new ideas quickly, supporting the work of the staff in improving outcomes for all pupils. They are confident in providing high levels of professional challenge for its RE to hold the school to account. Governors engage very effectively with parents, pupils and the staff as

a whole and are well informed about users' views of the school. They use these views to inform strategic priorities for development.

The pupils, staff, Governors and parents have a very good relationship with the hard working Parish Priest. Pupils understand the important role he plays within the life of the parish, school and wider community. Pupils consider themselves fortunate in having the parish church so near their school. They say how much they enjoy attending school/class masses in church and seasonal liturgies-especially if their parents are able to join them. They like trying to answer the thought provoking questions which the Parish Priest often asks them at Mass.

The school participates fully and actively in developing and implementing a variety of partnership activities. These activities themselves, and/or the resulting improvements in the school's provision and leadership and management, make an excellent contribution to pupils' good and often outstanding achievement and well-being. Pupils benefit significantly and develop exceptionally well in a number of areas which the school alone could not provide.

In the context of the distinctive identity of the Catholic school the inclusion of all is a central goal and a shared vision. Leaders and managers work with others within and beyond the school to ensure that pupils are given opportunities to enter into dialogue and collaborate with people from different backgrounds. The school actively promotes pupils' initiative in learning about and supporting charities at local, national and global levels. Within the school, there is concern, respect and hospitality towards the other. Pupils' friendship bonds cross cultural/faith/social/economic boundaries. Acts of Collective Worship leave room for the other person's spiritual identity, their modes of expression and their values. Provision for Religious Education results in an attitude of respect for all faiths, mutual understanding and integrity, enabling pupils to challenge each others' beliefs and values. They participate in neighbourhood and religious community activities, which bring them close to people on the margins of society and those who suffer. Parents from all backgrounds and especially parents who feel insecure in an academic environment are involved in decision making.

St. Joseph's is a family school in the very best sense of the word. Cultural diversity is celebrated and prejudice is vigorously rejected. All pupils and staff are individually valued and cherished for who they uniquely are just as much as for what they uniquely achieve. The leadership and management of the school (including the governing body), challenges and support staff and pupils to be as good as they possibly can be. Individual success, at whatever level is both recognised and celebrated. St. Joseph's is a school where Christ is truly at the heart of all that it seeks to achieve and where the things of God always take first place.

"My daughter loves taking part in the dance/drama assemblies." (Parent comment)

These are the grades for leadership and management

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.	1
How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.	1

The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met.	1
How well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and pupil well-being.	1
How effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion.	1