

Archdiocese of Cardiff

Inspection Report

St Joseph's RC Primary School

Inspection dates	6th – 7th July 2009
Reporting Inspector	Mrs A Manghan
Type of school	Primary
Age range of pupils	4 - 11
Number on roll	103
Local Authority	Herefordshire Council
Chair of Governors	Rev Dom Richard Simons OSB
School Address	The Avenue Walford Road Ross on Wye HR9 5AW
Tel. no.	01989 564655
Fax no.	01989 565841
E-mail address	
Parish(es) served	St Francis of Rome, Ross on Wye Most Holy Trinity, Ledbury
Date of previous inspection	6th-7th July 2006
Headteacher	Mrs B Davies

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archdiocese of Cardiff and Inspection of denominational education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Description of the School

St Joseph's RC Primary School is a voluntary-aided school within the Archdiocese of Cardiff and the County of Herefordshire. The school serves the parishes of St Francis of Rome, Ross on Wye and Most Holy Trinity, Ledbury. St Joseph's caters for pupils aged 4-11. At the time of inspection, 103 pupils were on roll. 47 pupils are Catholic, 50 are from other Christian denominations and 6 are of other faiths. 2 pupils have English as an additional language and 3% of pupils are eligible for free school meals.

Around 1 in 10 pupils left immediately following the announcement of a proposed merger with another school after a county-wide review of education. The merger did not come about and pupil numbers are gradually recovering.

Since the last inspection in July 2006, a new head teacher was appointed in May 2008 and new senior teachers were appointed in July 2008. There is no longer a deputy in the staffing structure. A new chair of governors and a number of other new governors were appointed in November 2008.

At the time of inspection, there are 3 full-time teachers, including the head teacher and 4 part-time teachers. Of the 7 teachers, 4 are Catholic. No teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies. The school also has 7 learning support assistants, 1 of whom is Catholic.

The building is well-maintained. New windows and fire doors have been installed and the central area has been developed to create a larger space for the whole school community to gather while waiting for the building of a new school hall, which is due to be completed September 2009. New toilets have been installed for older pupils.

Inspection grades

An overall judgement for each question is made using the following grades:

Grade 1: outstanding

Grade 2: good

Grade 3: satisfactory

Grade 4: unsatisfactory

Table of grades awarded

Key question	Inspection grade
How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners and why?	3
1. How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school/college?	1
2. How good is the provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school/college?	2
3. How well do learners achieve in religious education?	3
4. How effective are teaching and learning in religious education?	3
5. How well does the religious education curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?	3
6. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in religious education?	3
7. How effectively do leaders and managers provide for community cohesion?	2

The Archdiocesan reporting inspector wishes to express sincere thanks to the parish priest, governors, head teacher, staff, pupils and parents for the courtesy and co-operation received during the inspection.

Overall Effectiveness

How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners and why?

St Joseph's is a good Catholic school, where each child is viewed as unique: 'a gift from God to be treasured'. According to the Mission statement, St Joseph's aspires to provide 'a living, caring, welcoming community, wherein all pupils and members of staff are enabled to grow as whole persons.' This is lived out in policy and practice.

The governing body, together with a hard working and enthusiastic teaching and support staff, is totally committed to providing the very best for all pupils. The governing body is led by a knowledgeable and dedicated chair of governors.

The school has a good understanding of how to bring about continued improvement and the detailed action plan for religious education clearly outlines the way forward.

Significant steps have been taken recently to improve communication and links with the families of pupils and the parishes the school serves. The parish priest, and the headteacher and staff, work tirelessly to promote this. Tremendous

efforts are also made to outreach to the local and worldwide community, promoting community cohesion.

St Joseph's is a happy family school. It is well supported by parents who affirm that they chose this school because of its 'values, attitudes, beliefs and the quality of education' it provides. During the time of the inspection, the teaching was good overall with some outstanding features. Since her appointment, the headteacher has quickly identified the areas in need of improvement, particularly in relation to curriculum religious education and has put in place a detailed action plan to bring that about as quickly as possible. Initiatives are already in place and showing signs of having a positive impact on teaching and learning. The dedicated teaching staff are well supported by efficient teaching assistants who enjoy their work, feel valued and contribute to pupils' learning.

Pupils report that they are given many opportunities to become involved in the life of the school, to participate in outreach activities and that their teachers are approachable and deal effectively with any difficulties they may have.

The school values parents' contribution on many levels and are always looking for ways of improving and developing their partnership with parents.

Improvement since the last inspection

All key issues have been addressed since the last inspection in 2006, though they are being revisited following the appointment of the new head teacher in May 2008.

Key issue 1:

Address the need for regular monitoring of religious education in order raise standards in all classes.

As a result of recently increased monitoring of teaching and learning, staff have been released to observe good practice in the school and a new marking policy has been introduced to support assessment for learning. Learning activities are taking account of the NBRIA Levels of Attainment and support material by the Archdiocese has been introduced.

Key issue 2:

Recognise the closer links between monitoring, assessment and evaluation of the pupils' work at the end of the year.

A new electronic system has been introduced to record best-fit end of topic levels to be used in tracking the progress of pupils and setting targets for improvement.

Key Issue 3:

Review and develop 'before you begin' alongside the prayer life of the school.

The whole school acts of worship, at which staff are present, introduce the relevant religious education topics.

Key Issue 4:

Provide more stimulating and attractive prayer corners and displays throughout the school.

Prayer corners are now more attractive, with the use of cloths in the appropriate liturgical colour, fresh flowers and a religious statue. The prayer corner in the library invites pupils to offer spontaneous prayers to God.

Key Issue 5:

Continue to up-date resources for religious education, both specific and general in line with the 'Here I Am' programme.

The school now has new children's lectionaries, a variety of prayer and religious books, resources for the use of the liturgy group and guidance documents for the staff.

Key Issue 6:

Review the written work at upper Key Stage 2 in order to reflect better effort, recognition of ideas, presentation and content.

Monitoring confirms that there is a recent improvement in the quality of work at Key Stage 2 and more opportunities given for extended writing.

Key Issue 7:

Develop the self-evaluation process.

The whole school have been involved in the completion of the self-evaluation tool, which resulted in a detailed improvement plan.

Capacity to improve

The governing body, head teacher and staff are committed to the Catholic life of the school. The link governor for religious education is fully involved in supporting the school's development. The existing plans resulting from the self-review process, supported by the inspection findings and recommendations, provide a foundation on which to build continued improvements. The school has a good capacity to improve.

Grade: 3

What the school should do to improve further

- ❖ Embed recent initiatives in religious education so that the standards of teaching and learning continue to rise.
- ❖ Provide a wider range of prayer and worship opportunities and develop the prayer areas in order to give a greater prominence to the Scriptures and to provide greater opportunities for pupil interaction, so contributing to pupils' spiritual development.
- ❖ Further develop the daily act of worship to ensure a balance between opportunities for reflection and opportunities for prayer and praise.
- ❖ Ensure the delivery of the 'other faiths' section of the *Here I Am* programme.
- ❖ Continue to implement the priorities outlined in the development plan for improving the Catholic life of the school and curriculum religious education.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL/COLLEGE

Leadership and Management

1. How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school?

Good features

St Joseph's RC Primary school is a good school where the Mission Statement is at the heart of policy making and the 'golden rule' – treat one another as you would be treated – permeates the life of the school. The school has a welcoming and family centred ethos that is rooted in Gospel values. The Catholic life of the school benefits from the support and input of the parish priest, who has recently become the chair of governors, link governor for religious education and a member of the Archdiocesan Schools' Commission.

The governing body has recently received excellent training and input on their role as leaders of the Catholic school. The self-evaluation documentation is detailed and broadly accurate and most of the areas of development highlighted by the Inspection are already identified in the religious education development plan. This plan provides clear direction for improvement and, in particular, those relating to classroom religious education have already been targeted and are showing signs of development. The headteacher and governing body work very hard to promote the Catholic life of the school and reflect deeply upon how the school can develop its ethos, particularly in relation to the parishes and families it serves.

The headteacher and staff are committed to developing the Catholic life of the school. They seek advice and are open to initiatives that will bring about improvement. They promote high quality care for pupils and this is borne out overwhelmingly by parents in the pre-inspection questionnaire. Communication and links with parents and the parishes in terms of its Catholic life has been improved by the fortnightly newsletter, the 'Wednesday Word' resource, invitations to attend assemblies and the celebration of Mass, the formation of the

Liturgy music group, prayer partners, the inclusion of prayers in the induction booklet and the school's involvement in the pupils' preparation for the first reception of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.

The religious education coordinator is clear about expectations and what needs to be achieved. She has undertaken training with the Archdiocese and provides specific support and guidance for teaching staff.

The current Performance Management objectives for improving assessment for learning and behaviour management are linked closely with the overall Catholic ethos of the school that seeks to help each child fulfil their potential in Christ.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings

Grade: 1

Collective Worship

2. How good is the provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school?

Good features

The provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school is good. All acts of worship are inclusive of all and no parents have requested their child to be withdrawn. Prayer is integrated well into all lessons. Traditional prayers are said at the beginning and end of the day and grace is said before and after meals. The coordinator has written a very thoughtful prayer, which is said by pupils and staff at the beginning and end of religious education lessons, and a staff prayer, which provides a focus for reflection at the beginning of staff meetings.

The assembly programme has been developed to ensure that acts of worship follow a theme each week that reflects the liturgical year, the *Here I Am* topic and/or the Gospel value for the month.

Acts of worship provide a sacred space where pupils can listen to God's Word and reflect upon its impact on their lives. The whole school assembly, led by the parish priest and head teacher, and class assembly during the time of inspection, reflected upon what 'being a good neighbour means' and the example of Jesus. The parish priest regularly supports the Catholic life of the school by leading acts of worship and teaching the children about such things as the significance of being baptised, the use of liturgical colours and how to pray the rosary. He has arranged for the pupils to visit the parish church to learn about the signs and symbols they find there. Mass is celebrated with the school community either in school or at the church of St Francis of Rome every three weeks. Pupils are prepared well and a recently published in-house 'Children's Missal' helps them to respond confidently in prayer and song.

Pupils also take part in non-Eucharistic liturgies, for example, a May procession, Stations of the Cross and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Preparation for first reception of Reconciliation and Holy Communion is led by the head teacher and parish priest. Parents of pupils who first received the sacraments in the previous year host the following year's celebration meal and friends of the pupils support them by forming a choir for the celebration and by praying for them in school assemblies.

Each class has a prayer area with a focus on either the liturgical year, the *Here I am* topic and/or the Gospel value of the month. These are attractive with a statue, fresh flowers and use of liturgical colours. Pupils write their own prayers for use in daily acts of worship.

Shortcomings

The prayer areas need to be developed, with a greater prominence given to the Scriptures and opportunities for pupil interaction.

There is a need to provide opportunities for pupils to engage in a greater variety and richness of prayer forms.

The daily act of worship needs to ensure there is a balance between time for reflection and time for prayer and praise.

Grade: 2

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and Standards

3. How well do learners achieve in religious education?

Good features

Pupils' oral response in lessons that build on prior attainment, their enthusiastic engagement and response in 'hands on' activities in the early years and their growing capacity to consider more challenging questions in both key stages, show pupils are making progress across the key stages. However, this is not sufficiently evident in recorded work during key stage 2, though there has been an improvement recently. Teachers have begun to use Archdiocesan materials to support this.

Some pupils would also benefit from a less rigid approach to 'must', 'should' and 'could' activities to allow time in lessons for more able pupils to be challenged. This will allow them to engage in more in-depth and extended responses.

Recent very good guidance, provided by the religious education coordinator, regarding assessment of, and for, learning, is at too early a stage to show sufficient impact on standards. Pupils enjoy their work, generally behave well and

respond positively to more active and creative methods of learning that helps to develop their critical thinking skills.

There is a strong focus on, and understanding of, the impact of religious education on every day life, which makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Behaviour is good in and around the school. Pupils confirm that the initiative to encourage them to consider their actions and to take responsibility for them by use of the 'reflection sheet' is very helpful and productive. The 'values for life' programme, and pupils writing their own class rules, also contributes to this. Pupils make a good contribution to the parish, school and wider community through the prefect and buddy system, the school and eco-councils, charitable works and the liturgical music group.

Shortcomings

There is insufficient recorded work and in particular, in-depth writing at key stage two.

There is little evidence of pupils' use of ICT in religious education.

There is very little evidence of the teaching of other faiths.

Grade: 3

Quality of provision for religious education

4. How effective are teaching and learning in religious education?

Good features

Teaching follows the recommended Archdiocesan religious education programme, thus fulfilling the requirements of the *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education*. This is enhanced by the programme for daily worship that supports teaching and learning about the liturgical year, the *Here I Am* topics and Gospel values for living. 10% of curriculum time is given for the teaching of religious education as required by the Bishops of England and Wales. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to good with outstanding features. The outstanding features included: pupils' engagement with experiential and active methods of learning in the early years; the presentation of more challenging questions to consider; good pace in lessons that kept pupils focused; the effective use of ICT; the in-depth exploration of such key words as mercy, reimbursement, high status and parable; the use of effective questions to assess learning; pupils' working together collaboratively and independently.

There is recent evidence of marking that is both affirming, and which helps pupils to improve their work, and a small amount of evidence of peer and self-assessment.

The school has in place the beginning of a portfolio of levelled and moderated work, supported by a guidance file for staff, produced by the religious education coordinator. The school has begun to use SIMS assessment manager to track pupil progress. Eventually this will be helpful for identifying individual, group and whole school targets and areas for development.

The school is effective in supporting vulnerable pupils such as those who are new to the country and pupils with learning difficulties or with English as a second language. They receive good support, particularly through the deployment of very committed and skilled teaching assistants.

Most parents state that they are well-informed about what is taught in religious education and about their child's progress. The recent introduction of the 'Wednesday Word', a resource to support families in reflection upon the Sunday Gospel, is an excellent initiative. The 'open door' policy, use of questionnaires, the fortnightly newsletter, the presence of the headteacher at Sunday Liturgy, coffee mornings and an annual meeting with parents, allows good opportunity for parents' views and concerns to be shared.

Shortcomings

Recent initiatives in the teaching and learning of religious education are at an early stage of development.

Grade: 3

5. How well does the religious education curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?

Good features

Of the 3 full-time teachers and 4 part-time teachers, 4 are Catholic. No teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies or the 2-day Cardiff Archdiocese Religious Education Certificate. There are 7 teaching assistants, one of which is Catholic. 10% of curriculum time is given for the teaching of religious education as required by the Bishops of England and Wales.

Most lessons observed during the inspection were interesting and stimulating, built on prior learning, shared the learning objective and used a number of creative and active methods of teaching and learning.

Generally pupils with additional learning needs are well supported, though more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

The religious education programme and collective worship are closely linked to the 'values for life' programme. This is impacting positively on the spiritual and moral development of pupils and, in turn, is linked to personal, social and health education and, where appropriate, to sex and relationships education.

The pupils are happy and enjoy school. They take a leadership role through the school and eco-councils in improving their environment and reaching out to those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils organise their own sale of work and coffee mornings to raise monies for a number of charities, including CAFOD and Mission Together. Two pupils recently won awards presented by Archbishop Peter Smith for producing attractive posters advertising the Archdiocesan Fundraising Campaign in support of sick and retired priests in the diocese.

Shortcomings

Though religious education activities are frequently planned at three different levels, the more able are not always given sufficient time to apply themselves to more challenging and independent work.

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of religious education

6. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in religious education?

Good features

The leadership and management of the school is committed to its Catholic mission and faith development. The religious education coordinator keeps abreast of initiatives and good practice by attendance at Archdiocesan meetings and INSET. She disseminates information and leads in-house training. She supports colleagues, models good practice and provides advice on curriculum matters. Her recent dissemination of Archdiocesan guidance on the use of the NBRIA levels of attainment, and the accompanying support file for staff, provide clear direction in terms of expectations. She has put in place a school portfolio that contains the beginnings of moderated examples of pupils' work.

The school's overall evaluation of the Catholic life of the school and curriculum religious education and development plan for religious education is detailed and broadly accurate. There has been some monitoring of lessons and work scrutiny recently. Resources for religious education and collective worship are adequate and effectively used by staff.

The link governor for religious education is well-informed and very involved in developing this aspect of school life.

Shortcomings

Recent developments in the monitoring and evaluation of religious education are at an early stage of development.

Grade: 3

7. How effectively do leaders and managers provide for community cohesion?

Good features

The promotion of community cohesion at St Joseph's is good. This reflects the school's Mission Statement which promotes respect and tolerance of all, and the uniqueness of the individual as a gift from God to be treasured. The school has a community cohesion policy based on the Catholic Education Service document 'Catholic Schools, Children of other faiths and Community Cohesion' and the headteacher is a member of the local authority's community cohesion working group. There is a welcoming ethos in the school and parents acknowledge that staff of the school are very approachable. During the inspection, pupils showed evidence of respect for others by 'treating others as they would like to be treated'. Pupils confirm that they all feel included in acts of worship.

The school models a democratic system with a strong School Council that expresses a 'pupil voice'. The pupils are provided with a number of opportunities to participate in local community events, for example, the school choir sings in local events and sporting events. The school also raises funds for a number of charities, including CAFOD, Mission Together, Fair-trade and a school in Gambia. Links have also been established with an inner city school in Middlesex and a school in Bangladesh, as a means of developing awareness and support of others. The school serves the parish communities of Ross and Ledbury through Sunday liturgies.

Pupils from other countries are made to feel welcome and are able to share their language and culture with other pupils. Pupils with English as an additional language are well-supported. There is some evidence of the teaching of other faiths e.g. Judaism in upper Key stage 2 and some evidence in class work of environmental issues e.g. Year 4 pupils have looked at how paper is made and have considered the impact of waste and how it can be reduced, recycled and reused.

Shortcomings

The teaching of other faiths is not fully embedded into the religious education curriculum.

Grade: 2

The School's Response to the Inspection

We are delighted that the inspector found the “Catholic Life” of the school to be “outstanding”, recognising the commitment and dedication of all members of the school community who approach and develop the faith in a very practical and hands on fashion by living our “Golden Rule” in all that they do.

We are pleased that the inspection found that the standard and variety of “Collective Worship” continues to be of a high standard.

We are confident that the school is in an excellent position to address the key areas identified for development through (as mentioned in the report) a very detailed Development Plan, indeed as mentioned in the report, many areas have already begun to be addressed, but will need to be embedded over time in order to show impact.

Evidence Base for the Inspection

- The school's self-evaluation report, school information form and religious education action plan
- Religious education and other related policies
- Pre-inspection meeting with the chair of governors/parish priest/link governor for religious education
- Parent questionnaires
- Discussions with the headteacher, religious education coordinator and teaching staff
- Lesson observations
- Scrutiny of planning and assessment
- Scrutiny of pupils' work
- Scrutiny of the classroom prayer focus, displays and resources
- Evidence of previous work and activities
- Attendance at a whole school and a key stage 2 act of worship
- Discussion with the school council
- Observation of daily routines