



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

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

St. Joseph's Place, Devizes, SN101DD

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DfES Number: 8655214

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Headteacher: Mrs Sheila Jones

Chair of Governors: Mr Ciaran Dunne

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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: May 6-7<sup>th</sup> 2013

Date of previous inspection: May 2008

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington

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## Description of School

St. Joseph's is an average size primary school with 205 pupils on roll, 52% who are Catholic, serving the parish of the Immaculate Conception. Pupils come from the town of Devizes and further afield, from varied socio economic backgrounds in this mainly white British area. Pupils' prior knowledge and religious experience is below expectation on entry. Of the staff 37% are Catholic. The school has been challenged by a significant turnover of staff and recruitment difficulties since the last inspection but are now in a position from September to move forward with stability. The senior leadership team has been strengthened by the recent appointment of a teacher with a teaching and learning responsibility.

### Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

### Grade 3

St. Joseph's school, judges itself to be a requiring improvement school with some elements of good, and the findings of the inspection validate this judgement. It is an inclusive community whose ethos is characterised by an openness to all, with established links to the parents, the parish, and the wider community. Pupils participate and respond appropriately to the faith through an enriching provision for prayer life and liturgy. Outcomes from the religious education programme still require improvement but the school is aware of this and working to address it. Pupils' with special educational needs achieve as well as others because of extra support in lessons, and tasks being appropriately suited to their learning needs. The quality of teaching has been inconsistent, but this is now improving. The religious education programme makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

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

### Grade 3

The school's capacity to sustain and improve the quality of care and education it provides is satisfactory and there are discernible, improvements in its overall performance. At the last inspection, there were key areas identified for improvement, including the further development and enhancement of the use of assessment for learning strategies. This has been addressed with some success but is still to be fully developed. For instance the marking policy and its impact are still to become fully effective in driving individual improvement. Another aspect was the design of written tasks to reflect the full range of assessment levels, and to challenge the most able to make greater progress. There have been satisfactory steps taken to enhance the quality of written work but it has been hampered by the recent challenges related to the recruitment of staff, which has significantly impacted upon the leadership's time to focus on other aspects of Catholic life and the RE programme. The processes for managing the performance of staff and for their professional development is satisfactory and would benefit from governors and senior leaders providing a greater degree of challenge to raise levels of achievement to good and better. There has been recognition by the school that there has been a breakdown in communication between school, and parish and parents, which has not helped in this difficult phase however, the school is committed to working to address this. The

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appointment of an additional senior leader, together with signs of good practice in teaching observed during the inspection bodes well for the school. Staff morale is positive

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

- Governors to make themselves more probing and knowledgeable about Catholic life and RE outcomes, especially progress over time, so as to offer the highest quality of challenge and support
- Promote and share the already good practice currently in the school so that all teaching becomes consistently good and better
- Encourage pupils to develop the skills of planning and presenting their own liturgies, and work with pupils to interpret what the school's mission means for them

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

### **Grade 3**

Pupils are involved in the Catholic life of the school and make a positive contribution to it when they are invited and encouraged. Their good behaviour contributes to their own learning and the ethos of the school. They feel their voice is heard through pupil conferencing and they take responsibility for their own lives and the care of the younger children. For instance, Year 6 pupils were happy to answer questions from the Year 3 pupils preparing for their First Holy Communion. They absorb the shared values lived out in the Catholic ethos of the school and have an awareness of their relevance which they are able to articulate simply. They show conviction in their Faith through their own prayers and some good examples of reflective writing. They respond generously to the needs of others beyond the school, and this makes a valuable contribution to the welcoming openness and inclusivity of the school. Many are involved in fundraising for a variety of charities both home and overseas, for instance lively communication and support for children in Africa, as well as outreach to the local community and local charities, putting on a performance of Born for This in Lent. Although they have some opportunities to feedback to staff on their views and perceptions, they have yet to become involved formally in an examination and reflection on what the school mission means or entails for them in their own lives, and how they can contribute specifically towards the Catholic ethos and life of the school.

Their response to and participation in the prayer life of the school is satisfactory. Some are learning the skills of planning and preparing assemblies and Masses in school, and all are keen to participate and take part, in leading and reading prayers. The assembly observed during the inspection had some of all these features, and this is an area that pupils themselves say they would like to take more ownership of. They compose some beautiful and heartfelt prayers in response to their experiences and these are kept in class and prayed together. For example, in thinking of children in the world one pupil prayed 'that they would have a happy day too', and another, 'Dear God, I hope you keep the poor children safe and give them tea and love tonight'. Their demeanour and reverence at prayer demonstrates a growing faith, as well as a sense of the sacred and the special time for prayer. Even the youngest know the special-ness of prayer and can sit in quietness in the whole school assembly. Pupils however need to take more ownership in the planning of their acts of worship, as well as taking the lead and participating. They themselves see this as a challenging opportunity and are keen to organise themselves.

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Achievement and progress in religious education is satisfactory throughout the school. Prior attainment on entry is below average, and by the end of Key Stage 2 it remains below although some do make more than satisfactory progress. Learning outcomes for all groups of pupils, especially those with special educational needs and those with EAL are satisfactory. Pupils can discuss the topics they cover and relate them to their own lives, at a satisfactory level. Their knowledge and understanding of the Faith is variable due in large part to the interrupted teaching they have received further down the school. Pupils in Year 4 and in Year 6 have been particularly affected. However, they are able, for example, to explain the connection between the Last Supper and the Mass, and have a secure grasp of prayer and its importance. The school have also identified this as a key focus for next year. The quality and presentation of written work is variable, with some good examples amongst the satisfactory. In lessons pupils work well and say they enjoy the subject, taking a genuine interest in learning about the Faith and the faiths of others. With the growing impact of teaching strategies, they are starting to develop their independent learning skills, and in the case of the less able, being set more appropriate pitched tasks to support their learning.

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

### **Grade 3**

Leadership and management promote the Catholic life of the school satisfactorily, with appraisal, review and planning for future improvement. Up until now the action plans have not been able to be fully implemented because of the difficulties in recruiting and retaining appropriate Catholic staff. During this current year the head teacher has had to cover a year group as well as carry out her own role – and without a deputy head to share the burden. The Catholic ethos of the school does underpin all of its activities, and leadership has been proactive and determined in seeking support from the diocese as well as taking up opportunities for governor and teacher training, for instance, the 'New to Catholic Theology' course, cluster RE Assessment meetings, and members of the teaching team attending Theology for Teachers. Support also comes from working closely with the Wiltshire Catholic Partnership and specifically St. Edmund's school in Calne.

Staff changes have enabled more frequent Inset days and the revisiting and re sharing of the vision of the school's mission which has been beneficial for all. A whole school revisit of the mission, giving the pupils themselves the opportunity to explore the mission statement and their role in it would prove to be very beneficial. The head teacher reports to the governing body on the quality of Catholic life and RE, and in the school development plan objectives are linked to performance management. The processes for monitoring and evaluating achievement and attainment in the subject RE are beginning to be embedded but it is too early to assess the full impact. The effectiveness of the vision for the future is seen in the positive morale of the hard working, dedicated staff, the pupils' good care for one another, and the very good relationships between staff and pupils.

The governing body is made up of supportive members who are committed to sustaining the distinctive Catholic ethos and standards. They visit the school to support their work when they possibly can. They have systems for seeking the views of parents and pupils and mechanisms for acting on these. For instance, the 32 replies from the Parental Questionnaire were almost all positive and indicated how pleased these parents were with the school. The governors have supported the school during the protracted staffing uncertainty, but need to become more knowledgeable and challenging in the best and most positive way. The governor training day

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towards the end of May will hopefully re energise and focus the governing body in its vital role. The link governor for religious education, who is also the parish priest, is a frequent and welcome visitor. All statutory and canonical responsibilities are met.

There is a clear policy promoted by governors and senior staff to promote community cohesion resulting in the school having an openness to all. All are included in its life and its generous outreach to the local and the global community is a real strength. However, there is not always a common, shared perception of the work of the school. A small number of parents have expressed disappointment in their children's progress. This together with significant issues related to staff retention and recruitment and its impact on the quality of teaching has resulted in some withdrawing them from the school. There is however a determination to address and improve the school's standing in the eyes of the parents and community, the majority of whom have expressed satisfaction and praise for the work that it does. This is particularly true in considering the increasing number of more difficult and needy children, which the school has welcomed with great openness. The school collaborates well with other schools and participates in community undertakings, including local charities. The curriculum provides a clear exploration of other faiths, and good use is made of resources. Those of other denominations or faiths feel that they are able to express their own beliefs comfortably, and all feel included and welcomed into every aspect of school life. Parents from all backgrounds are welcomed and supported.

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

### **Grade 3**

Provision for prayer life is satisfactory in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils, through assemblies and liturgies, and opportunities for reflection. The school supports the parish run preparation programme for First Holy Communion. There are suitable occasions during the day for spiritual nourishment through prayer and moments of reflection. The school acknowledges the dedicated prayer room could be developed further. The liturgical year is marked, planned, and celebrated, particularly Advent, Lent and Holy Week. Parents and other members of the community are invited to attend. The parish church close to the school is a key resource, particularly for the joint Parish Masses, and the school is hoping to provide further class Masses in the school. Year 6 have the annual opportunity to attend the leavers mass in Bristol as well as a retreat with their sister school. Prayer and worship, however, follow a fairly routine structure, and there is an urgent need to spend time on innovation and particularly to encourage pupils' ownership of their liturgies, developing the skills of planning and presenting the collective acts of worship.

The curriculum meets the needs of all groups of pupils, as well as meeting the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education requirements, such as the allocation of time. Relationship Education is dealt with sensitively and clearly from a Catholic standpoint. It follows the Journey in Love syllabus and has met both governors' and parents' approval. The new syllabus God Matters was introduced in 2011 and is steadily being adapted to meet the local needs of the school. The beliefs of other faiths are explored through topics in the schemes of work. The colourful art work and displays around the school reinforce the RE topics or liturgical seasons the pupils are studying, they affirm the creators and educate others, and visibly declare the Catholic ethos of the school. Resources to support teaching, and to enliven and enrich the schemes of work, are satisfactory. The curriculum makes a positive contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils.

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The quality of teaching and purposeful learning requires improvement in order to enable and consolidate progress over time. The current teaching staff are all relatively new to the school, but the six part lessons observed during the inspection indicated good practice and emerging good impact on learning and achievement. Good elements of teaching enabled the pupils to learn well because they engaged their interest and provided challenge, for instance, in a Year 2 lesson on the story of Emmaus, the well focussed questioning probed for understanding of meaning, and expected pupils to use the word 'because' in their answers, A quick return to the carpet and a mini plenary enabled the teacher to uncover misunderstandings, reshape the lesson, and give targeted support. Good use was made of peer work which encouraged independent and peer learning. The less effective teaching saw the teachers doing most of the talking and the activity often became the key element of the lesson, a task driven approach rather than teaching for meaning. There is a growing expectation of real intellectual effort from the pupils, and concern about how they present their work, but this is as yet inconsistent. The scrutiny of written work in the past year shows that marking is inconsistent, sometimes helpful in pointing towards ways to improve, with a dialogue between teacher and pupil, but also sometimes lacking any challenge or expectation of real effort and care over their assignments. Teaching assistants provide satisfactory support in allowing the teacher to split children into smaller groups with tasks tailored to their learning needs

Assessment procedures are in place but in need of improvement, in terms of impact on attainment and achievement, and the use of level indicators to begin to monitor individual progress and achievement. The school is aware that the data gathered must now be translated into lesson plans and lesson objectives in order to meet the specific learning needs of every pupil, as well as linked to the new God Matters syllabus learning objectives. The pupils are positive about the subject and their teachers, and have expressed their desire for a more challenging and quickening pace of teaching and learning. As an older pupil said: 'Let us get on with it (our own learning)'.