



ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC COMPREHENSIVE

Nythe Road, Swindon, SN3 4AP

Telephone: 01793 825999

e-mail address: pjwells@stjosephs.swindon.school.uk

DfES Number: 866 5409

Headteacher: Mr Peter Wells

Chair of Governors: The Rt Rev Mgr Canon R Twomey VF

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

Date of inspection: 28th, 29th November 2005
Date of previous inspection: 27th November 2000
Reporting Inspector: Mrs Anne Barrett

Description of School

St Joseph's is a larger than average 11-18 voluntary aided comprehensive school which has just become a Business and Enterprise College. Currently it operates on two sites but will move into new, purpose-built accommodation in September 2006.

The school serves the Catholic community from Swindon and surrounding districts. There are 1,205 students on roll of whom 1,098 are baptised Catholics. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is below average. Approximately 27% of students do not have English as their first language, with many of these being recent arrivals from Goa.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

This school is a beacon for what Catholic education should provide for young people. There is a strong determination to improve further.

The leadership of the headteacher and governors is exemplary and ensures that the Catholic life of the school is always to the forefront. The school's mission is unequivocally shared with all and made clear in all aspects of planning. The RE curriculum is very well planned, is inclusive and provides opportunities for all pupils to succeed. Achievement in religious education at GCSE has risen well above national average this year. Advanced Level philosophy and ethics is a real strength of the department and enriches students' faith development.

Grade: 1

Improvement since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the school has been very successful in improving standards in RE at GCSE, with a significant improvement in boys' performance.

All students in Year 13 now follow a taught RE course but the school is aware that it still needs to improve the amount of time given to this. Plans are in hand to remedy this for

September 2006. There is now a range of opportunities for students to take part in reflective activities through the curriculum and on retreats to Kintbury.

Grade: 2

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

This is a reflective school which knows itself well and is committed to ongoing improvement. Governors, senior leaders and all staff share a strong sense of commitment and purpose. The school is particularly effective in evaluating its own strengths and weaknesses in relation to RE and its Catholic life. These are clearly articulated in its whole school and RE development plans, examination analysis and governors' reports. The strong, systematic monitoring of teaching and learning in RE and departmental improvement planning are to be commended as models of good practice.

Appropriate plans are in place to further improve provision through the implementation of new courses at KS4, the sixth form and the appointment of another full time RE specialist, from September 2006. In addition, the appointment of a professionally remunerated lay chaplain has enhanced focus and capacity across the school. The school continues to benefit from support by priests and others within and beyond the deanery.

The overall quality of school self-evaluation is excellent and has been effectively used to establish clear priorities for the development of the school.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

- To revisit the Mission Statement in the light of the move to the new school building.
- To implement the plans to ensure increased time for 6th Form RE and year 11 in order to meet the recommended time.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

Leadership of the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The headteacher provides clarity of vision, which is effectively communicated to all. This vision is shared by all members of the school community and has an impact on students beyond the school. The inclusion of all learners is central to this vision. The effect is to create a strong sense of Christian community within the school. The headteacher is well supported in this by senior leaders, governors, the RE department and Lay Chaplain, with pastoral leaders making a significant contribution. The Governing Body are very effective in fulfilling their role in relation to the school's Catholic foundation. They are actively involved and well informed about its religious life.

Leadership provides an outward looking community which enables youngsters to become better people because they have lived the values promoted by the school. These young people are part of the vision, rather than mere recipients of it.

Grade: 1

Collective Worship

The school provides a wealth of opportunities for students to take part in collective worship. Masses for the start of the school year are held for all year groups and a Mass for new parents takes place annually in September. In spite of the organisational challenges of operating on two sites, class Masses take place on each site once a week. These are organised and led by pupils with the help of their tutor and Lay Chaplain and priest. Student involvement is a particularly strong feature of year group liturgies and Feast Day Masses, through singing, reading and role-play activities. Tutor group prayer is highly valued by students who report that it happens consistently and is centred on a set theme. Senior leaders play an important part in leading prayers in collective worship, weekly staff meetings and in-service days. This plays an important part in fostering the school as a community of faith.

Chaplaincy is a particular strength of the school with students participating in wide range of events such as SVP, fundraising and trips to Kintbury. The introduction of quiet time in both chapels during lunch is proving successful with students being given opportunities to pray and reflect on their faith journey. The recently appointed Lay Chaplain is proving to be extremely effective in carrying on the strong legacy of her predecessor.

Grade: 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Standards at the end of key stage 3 and 4 are above average with no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of students. The progress that students make in both key stages is good.

Students' progress at key stage 4 in RE, relative to their prior attainment, is greater than that of the core subjects. At key stage 4 standards at GCSE for the Full Course have improved significantly. The 2005 results were well above national average, with 10% of the cohort achieving A*. Boys' results have improved and are higher than national average by 10%; girls' results are also higher than national averages by 11%.

This can be attributed to exemplary planning which takes account of a range of abilities and learning styles. Separate gender teaching with careful matching of teachers to groups has had a positive influence on improving standards.

Although the Short Course results were lower than the previous year, some EAL students achieved higher grades than that predicted by key stage 3 average point scores.

In the sixth form the AS and A2 in philosophy and ethics A-E in 2005 was 100%. Numbers are too small to make valid comparisons but value added indicators were very positive.

General RE makes a significant impact on students' religious development and is perceived by them as being of value, enabling them to reflect on the relationship between faith and life. This could be further improved by increasing the amount of curriculum time to the recommended 5%.

Behaviour in lessons is very good. Students are reflective and have a real awareness of a dimension beyond the material. They are well-informed 'religiously literate' young people, who have a high regard for the subject and their teachers.

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The quality of teaching and learning in key stages 3, 4 and in the sixth form is good, with some outstanding features. The department has been particularly effective in its intervention strategies which ensure that students remain focused on their learning. Monitoring of teaching and learning is good and ensures that the needs of all learners

are met. The school's own evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning matches those of the inspection. Students with English as a second language make particularly good progress.

Relationships between students and teachers are of a high order, encouraging very positive attitudes to the subject and an excellent work ethic. Students have a genuine interest in the subject and appreciate the efforts put in by their teachers to enable them to progress.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and demonstrate enthusiasm, commitment and energy in their teaching. Lessons are well planned and effectively take account of the needs of individuals. Teachers ensure that students are clear about learning objectives and employ a range of teaching and learning strategies to ensure that students make good progress.

Assessment procedures are currently being reviewed to incorporate AFL (Assessment for Learning) strategies of peer assessment within Key Stage 4 and sixth form schemes of work. Student performance is effectively analysed against baseline data by each teacher, in order to monitor progress and set targets for improvement.

The department has been successful in improving links with parents and carers through the introduction of a homework sheet which clearly sets out what the student needs to complete over a term.

Grade: 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The school provides a broad and balanced religious education for all, which fulfils the requirements of the *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education*. The curriculum is very well planned and continually under review, with key Stage 3/4 Strategy strands effectively incorporated. Provision is made in all schemes of work for students' different learning needs.

Plans are in hand to increase the amount of curriculum time for year 11 for September 2006. Whilst the lack of time is a cause for concern, the RE Full Course GCSE results for 2005 results were well above national average. The school is also aware that provision for General RE in years 12 and 13 needs to be enhanced. This will be addressed with the introduction of an externally accredited AQA General RE course in September 2006, which will be given the appropriate time.

The curriculum of the school is enriched through the many opportunities for students to take part in fundraising, SVP, retreats to Kintbury and the strong sense of fellowship with their link school, St. Cyprians, in Uganda. Students learn across the curriculum and

through collective worship that there is something beyond the material in life and are encouraged to value inward experience and consciousness. In addition to these they are encouraged to develop an imaginative sense of awe, wonder and reverence for themselves and others through subjects such as English, history, art and music.

An appropriate programme for sex and relationship education takes place through aspects of RE, Pastoral, science and citizenship courses. This is currently under review with the intention of implementing the Birmingham programme.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

Leadership and management of RE is exemplary. There is a clear focus on the raising of standards through highly effective planning, monitoring and self-evaluation. The impact of leadership and management has made a significant impact on raising standards across the Key Stages. Members of the department share a strong sense of Mission, with an explicit commitment to promoting faith development as well as achieving high standards in RE. The department's improvement planning, monitoring and reviewing is especially effective. The head of department is collaborative and leads by example. She has an empathic understanding of her colleagues' skills and experience, which she puts to good use. Departmental finances and resources are well managed. The organisation of RE is excellent with effective links with parishes. Parents are encouraged to support and be involved in liturgy and retreat programmes. They are very positive links with the local priests and the diocesan adviser.

Grade: 1