



INSPECTION REPORT

ST. Joseph's Catholic Primary School

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DCSF Number:801/3405

Headteacher: Mr Matthew Condon
Chair of Governors: Mrs Shelagh Williams

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: 2nd . 3rd December 2008
Date of previous inspection: 21st . 22nd November 2005
Reporting Inspector: Mrs Maisie Foster

St Joseph's is a Catholic voluntary-aided school situated in Fishponds, Bristol. The school serves the parish of St Joseph's and the local community. The school draws its pupils from a mixed socio-economic catchment area.

At the time of the inspection, the number on roll was 272, of whom 66% is Catholic. The number of pupils on roll is decreasing in line with Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance. The percentage of pupils with a statement of Special Educational Need (SEN) is above the national average but that of pupils identified with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average.

The school reflects wide cultural diversity and the number of pupils joining the school who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is increasing.

Pupils' attainment on entry to school is slightly below or in line with pupils of the same age nationally. The number of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is below the national average.

The school is very popular with parents and is over-subscribed. Attendance is improving and is just below the national average, though above the average for Bristol schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

The Senior Leadership Team and Governors of the school have a clear vision of its direction and know how to move the school forward to achieve its goals. Structures and systems are being put in place to ensure that school improvement and the raising of standards are priorities. The effectiveness of the Religious Education (RE) owes much to the strong leadership of the Subject Leader and the Headteacher, supported by a well-informed Governing Body.

Teaching is predominantly good and the good practice identified in this inspection provides a model for where teaching could be improved further. Standards are good overall. Pupils make good progress across the ability range and from year to year.

The school has identified what it does well and has good structures to support improvement which will need time to embed consistently across all key stages.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

The issues identified in the last inspection of Religious Education in 2005 focused on:

1. *continuing to develop planning and assessment in RE to include differentiation by task, so as to ensure that individual children are being effectively challenged in their learning.*

To address this considerable task, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and staff have focussed on improving the quality of planning, to ensure a creative and engaging learning experience for all pupils. This model has been adopted by all teachers; implementation has been more successful in some classes than others. The school leaders are determined to make this good practice consistent through all classes. The challenge for high achieving children is being provided in the differentiated marking approach, where the teacher writes a question, appropriate for the individual's level of ability for that learner to answer. Where practice is best, some outstanding insights of a spiritual nature are evident in pupils' work. This process is still at an early stage of development but has already made a significant contribution to challenging pupils' thinking and consequent learning.

2. *Improving the marking and evaluation of children's work in order to enhance its quality.*

The evidence from the scrutiny of pupils' work during this inspection indicates that most teachers are using marking as a means of direct dialogue with the pupil, as described in the paragraph above. Most teachers offer the learner effective ways to improve their work. The focus on assessment for learning is a fairly recent one, but there is evidence to suggest that it has already made a significant impact where it is being used consistently. Pupils' work has improved both quantitatively and qualitatively since the last inspection.

3. *Ensuring that the new Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme is implemented and becomes embedded in the overall curriculum.*

The Headteacher has set up meetings to involve the Governors, Staff and the Diocesan Primary Adviser to review and evaluate the new scheme this term. The involvement of parents is programmed for next term and its implementation of the scheme will take place from Spring 2009 onwards.

4. *Developing further the prayer life of the school for staff and children, ensuring that children know and understand the formal prayers of our religion especially the prayers for the deceased.*

The development of the prayer life of the school is a focus of Collective Worship for all teachers. The Senior Leadership Team, supported by staff, has worked hard to ensure that prayer is central to the life of the school community. The formal prayers of the Church are taught and known by pupils, appropriate to their ages and abilities. They are used alongside the children's spontaneous prayers.

Grade 2

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The dynamic leadership of the recently appointed Headteacher is strongly supported by the re-structured Senior Leadership Team and an inspirational Subject Leader. This places the school in a strong position to make further improvements.

Additionally, the capacity to improve is strengthened by the re-organised Governing Body. Its new members and the former team are enthusiastic, well-informed and ready to both support and challenge the school in its work.

Grade 2

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to develop the new methods of assessment throughout the school to ensure consistency
- Ensure that the system of marking for differentiation is consistent throughout each class
- Embed the changes in the Governing Body and formalise its monitoring role
- Implement the programme for Education for Personal Relationships and the Sex Relationships Education programme

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The Governors and Headteacher have a clear vision to promote and foster the development of each pupil in all aspects of their faith within the context of a Catholic school. All policies and practice are informed by the faith-centred Mission Statement which the school community shares. The raising of standards and a commitment to inclusion is an integral part of the school's mission. The inclusion of all learners is central to this mission because of a common belief that each individual is part of Creation, made in the image and likeness of the Creator. This belief is evident in every aspect of the life and work of the school. The Chair of Governors monitors the provision for pupils with Special Educational Need to ensure equality of opportunity in terms of access to resources and commensurate progress.

The Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities regarding Collective Worship, policies, staff appointments, Child Protection, policies and admissions. They monitor the Catholic life of the school formally through regular meetings. The Chair of Governors meets the Headteacher weekly and notes for future action are made to ensure that the focus on raising standards and promoting the personal and spiritual development of pupils has continuing priority. The parish priest, who is a Governor

formally monitors the acts of Collective Worship led by the Headteacher, as well as visiting classes. His involvement has been less than he and the staff would have wished on account of ill-health.

The Chair of Governors also maintains close contact with other schools so that the flow of up-to-date information and challenge to the school leaders is maintained. Governors take their responsibilities seriously and plan pro-actively for the future. For example, an associate governor attends meetings and training with a mentor for support, so that when a vacancy occurs, there is an informed person ready to take up the responsibility of a governor's position.

Governors support the Catholic life of the school and informally monitor its effectiveness by attending liturgies, including the celebration of Mass and whole school Acts of Collective Worship. The programme for whole school Masses is planned with the parish priest at the beginning of the academic year, emphasising its central importance. Older pupils take responsibility for younger ones when they attend Mass in the parish church which is on the same site as the school. In order to address the falling attendance at Sunday Masses which means that some pupils have no experience of worshipping as a community in a church, paired classes attend a weekday Mass with parishioners. The children learn to respect the House of God, their behaviour is exemplary and they become part of a praying community.

Further informal monitoring takes place through the frequent visits of the RE Link Governor who is also a Eucharistic Minister whose ministry provides a spiritual dimension and a role model for service to the parish and school communities.

Good links with parents and the parish reflect the school's commitment to a community held together by shared values and beliefs.

The Chair of Governors has a long association with the school and is extremely proud of the improvement made in the last year.

Grade 2

Collective Worship

Prayer is a deeply significant feature of the school. Pupils are surrounded by displays of attractive texts of the formal prayers of the church which they are taught and pray together with reverence. Each class has a high quality prayer corner where pupils see their own prayers valued and well displayed, alongside artefacts to interest them and reflect upon. Staff and children pray together. Every day in school starts and ends with a prayer and a time to reflect. All staff and Governors' meetings begin with a prayer or reflection. Pupils pray for their own family and their needs, including asking for God's help to add up big numbers. Children pray for each other, they choose other pupils' spontaneous prayers as well as their own. Their prayers reflect the issues of the wider world, for example, the United Nations International Day of Peace when the Year 6 pupils planned and led the assembly. They provided a role model for the younger children, explaining the work of the United Nations. They shared their learning about countries in conflict, wrote and read aloud their poems on peace and led their own

prayers for peace, written on dove and people shaped paper. The whole school sang the UN Song for Peace. The event appeared in the press exemplifying the community of school, parents and governors focusing on their shared concern for a world issue of great significance.

In addition to acts of collective worship, children see the status of their own prayers enhanced by being on the school Blog and shared with their family and whole community.

Class and whole school liturgies are well-planned, purposeful and vibrant. A range of strategies, including role play, ICT, dance, music and singing, ensures breadth of experience to extend learning and spiritual development. Pupils listen with interest and respect and pray from their hearts. The Headteacher and teachers, supported by the Subject Leader, plan the programme for collective worship to include the themes from *Here I Am (HIA,)* *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (S.E.A.L.)*, the Gospel readings from the previous Sunday, and the liturgical seasons of the Church. The whole school approach provides coherence, linking the RE curriculum with collective worship and the values embedded in the school ethos. This results in a broad and exciting coverage, which reinforces learning in RE and nourishes the spirituality of the school community. Class Acts of Worship are well organised, involving the pupils as planners and presenters of their own learning and providing positive models for their peers. No pupils are withdrawn from Collective Worship.

The school recognises that many children will not have attended Mass at the weekends and compensates for this by including the appropriate gospel reading in assembly. This inclusive approach also results in a greater understanding of the gospels for all pupils. Pupils are all involved in the celebration of Mass in school, which is planned by the parish priest, the Subject Leader and the Headteacher. Pupils are well-prepared for their participation in readings, their own Bidding Prayers and music. This gives the activity a proper status and confirms for parents that priorities are where they want them to be.

Gospel values are reflected in the excellent relationships which the adults and children have with each other and the care they show each other and the wider community. Governors frequently share in school celebrations with parents and parishioners worshipping together as a community of faith.

School and parish have strong links. The school leads the preparation for First Holy Communion and the sacrament of Reconciliation in the parish. The Subject Leader for RE builds on the learning achieved in HIA and spends two whole days at weekends to extend and deepen the understanding of the children, including those who do not attend the school. The weekly attendance by two classes at the parish Mass gives the pupils and parish an opportunity to worship together. For these Masses the children do not prepare readings or public prayers. They are present to pray and learn the responses of the congregation and join with their parents and parishioners in the most important liturgy of the Church.

The liturgy is enhanced by the impact of good quality music and singing led by the school choir. Children enjoy singing and sung praise and prayer is a particular strength of the school's collective worship. The diversity of the school community is reflected in

the themes of Collective Worship. For example, in the topic on ~~journeys~~ pupils see the pilgrimages of their own particular faith discussed and valued, as well as their individual faith journey through life. As part of the curriculum appropriate role models such as Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi are taught to pupils, strengthening the concept that goodness is a worldwide value and not the monopoly of Europeans.

Time is given for reflection and discussion on spiritual matters. The whole staff attended a retreat to focus on their own spiritual values. So successful was it, that this year it is to happen again, involving the Governors, to provide dedicated time to reflect on and discuss the school's mission. Pupils too have opportunities to reflect and pray together outside the school context. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils have the opportunity of retreats to extend their spiritual vision and experience shared values and hopes.

Grade 1

Community Cohesion

The school is a welcoming place with good links to the local community, the parish and other schools. It is a multi-cultural school which works hard to value and reflect the diversity of its school community. The shared values are evident in its every day practices, its excellent relationships and the ethos of the whole school. Its ideals and vision are articulated in the curricular focus on different cultures and faiths to ensure a respect for, and tolerance of, its diverse community. To promote understanding of different faiths and cultures, Collective Worship reflects the diverse nature of the community. Planned experiences of other cultures expand knowledge and understanding in an interesting and lively way, for example dances in national costume, music from Africa and India, together with pupils' own presentations of their faith and that of others. Teaching about other faiths promotes an understanding of the way other faiths search for truth and pupils are able to articulate this process. They are confident in talking about their own and other faiths. One Sikh pupil explained: ~~We~~ We are learning about the same things . how to be good people and treat each other well. We are part of one family and believe in one God, whatever name we call him+. Children play together, work together across the differences of race and faith, recognising each other's similarities and respecting differences.

There is a strong sense of belonging. Parents comment on the ~~good~~ good sense of community+and are proud of the well-rounded, confident learners their children become as a result of their being at St. Joseph's. Adults and pupils work together to strengthen the community in all its diverse facets. As one Year 6 pupil put it, when asked what she would most miss when she went on to Secondary school ~~I~~ never like to leave my family, and St Joseph's is like my second family+

Parents are appreciative of the quality of care they feel their children receive and the influence that the Catholic ethos has on relationships. As one said, ~~They~~ They teach respect in this school . for self and for each other. All the adults model it and the ethos stays with the children into their lives outside school.

The school is committed to good communication with parents and carers through newsletters, questionnaires, three written reports a year, the school web-site and the

Blog. Certain information is translated into Polish by a member of staff, to reach a particular minority, some of whom have limited access to English. Parents are actively involved in school improvement. A workshop for parents explaining the current approaches to teaching mathematics gave parents the confidence to be directly involved in supporting their children's learning. For those pupils starting school, systems are in place to maximise confidence and familiarity. The induction procedures include home visits and many opportunities for children and parents or carers to visit school. Even when pupils have started school, the Reception class teacher welcomes parents who would like to stay with their children. This helps form positive and strong relationships between home and school.

Opportunities to take on responsibilities are encouraged and Year 6 make their contribution to the school community by being Buddies to younger children; taking prospective parents around the school and explaining how the school works; its values; faith, and how the pupils learn. Pupils take seriously their responsibility to care for each other in the wider world and develop an awareness of global issues and individual response. They learn about moral and social issues as they raise funds for the Catholic Association for Overseas Development (CAFOD), Lepira, or do their Waterwalk for Ethiopia. They see injustice and unfairness and are encouraged, in the spirit of *"I was hungry and you fed me"* to do something about it. Pupils are not only encouraged to live the Gospel in this way but to follow the good role models their teachers provide. One teacher did a sponsored sky-dive to raise funds for Ethiopia, which provided a role model commented on with great enthusiasm by the children!

The school works across various networks in a spirit of mutual support and to increase learning opportunities for pupils and teachers. The local secondary school provides valued support in Science and Design and Technology. The Catholic secondary school to which most pupils transfer, facilitates a retreat for Year 6 pupils and those from another primary, so that pupils have opportunities to get to know each other before starting their Secondary school and to pray and reflect together. This promotes social and personal development, as well as enhancing their spiritual development.

Pupils develop a sense of stewardship through activities such as re-cycling and litter collection. The School Council provides a model for democracy on a small scale. To teach their peers about conservation of energy they made posters to remind people to switch off lights when rooms were not being used and adopted their own slogan: *"A green school is a good school"*

The composition of the Governing Body reflects the cultural diversity of the community it serves.

Grade 2

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Standards of attainment in RE are good. Pupils make good progress from year to year, including in work which challenges their thinking and in the ways they record their learning. The whole school focus on cross-curricular writing has improved standards in RE as pupils have opportunities to work on extended pieces of writing. The best examples of this high quality work provide good models to be followed throughout the school. Pupils expressed their appreciation of having a longer time to focus on one piece of work and develop it more thoroughly using their literacy skills. In addition, there is a significant amount of effective learning through oral work, including discussion and role play, thought-provoking questioning by class teachers and good quality group work.

On entry to school, pupils' attainment is judged to be in line with, or just below the national average. The good practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the support given to these young children, results in their being in line with the average attainment of pupils of this age, by the time they reach Year 1.

The high expectations teachers and an effective support staff have, in relation to children's behaviour and work, adds significantly to the standards pupils achieve in RE.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The teaching of RE is good. In the lessons observed there was an atmosphere of calm purposefulness. The pace was brisk, pupils were engaged and motivated. Teachers were confident in their subject knowledge which allowed them to take risks and give opportunities for more creative and stimulating learning.

Learning has been a focus for development for the last three years. During this time the school has been involved in the *Successful Learner Project*. This model of learning encourages pupils to develop a range of learning behaviours and the vocabulary to describe them. This leads to pupils being explicitly aware of what they need to do in order to learn and to take more responsibility for their own learning, thereby becoming more independent learners.

Lessons are well-planned, well-prepared and well-organised. Teachers build on prior learning and share the learning objectives with the pupils so that they know what they will be expected to know and be able to do. Teacher questioning is effective, expanding pupils' responses where necessary to clarify meaning. Pupils are given time to think before answering and pupils show patience and mutual support by waiting and listening to each other. They are confident in expressing their opinions and values, knowing that both the adults who work with them and their peers will listen with respect and make appropriate responses. Children enjoy learning because teachers, as pupils say, make it exciting.

In the best practice seen, teachers had annotated the published planning sheets to include resources, differentiation for pupils of different abilities, the use of Teaching Assistant support and brief notes about individual pupils. Such conscientious preparation leads to good, well structured lessons resulting in effective learning. This is not yet embedded in the whole school.

The Subject Leader for RE has trialled a new method of individual assessment, using levels of attainment and this has been evaluated for the past year. It has now become the whole school approach and all teachers are using it. Training and support have been put in place by the Headteacher and Subject Leader to ensure its secure implementation. The Senior Leadership Team is aware that it will take time to embed and has identified ways of achieving this through tracking and moderation.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The school has worked with a group of Bristol schools to develop an approach to the curriculum that suits the needs and interest of its pupils. The resulting topic-based curriculum motivates children to learn in the context of a faith-based school with a culturally diverse community. Pupils find learning exciting and report that they want to come to school to learn. The Successful Learners Programme has encouraged them to view themselves as learners; it is part of their identity. They enjoy the many opportunities they have to gain new skills and knowledge across the curriculum, including of other faiths, Judaism and Sikhism in particular.

The school follows the national programme, *Here I Am*, which is approved by the Bishops' Conference. Planning in RE follows the structure given in the *Here I am* programme, appropriately amended by teachers to meet the needs of their particular pupils and so maximise learning. The school, led by a very effective Subject Leader has worked hard to interpret the RE programme in a creative and imaginative way, using, art, drama, and music. Role-play is used well in lessons and in Collective Worship to develop empathy and deepen thinking, both on the part of the participants and the observers, who may ask challenging questions of the person in role. ICT is used productively to engage pupils' interest and help them to learn more effectively. Pupils' learning skills are extended through research on-line, as are their critical faculties. Their self-esteem is increased by seeing themselves and their work on the school Blog, with their achievements publicised and celebrated. Annual dramatic productions develop self-confidence and team-building skills and the whole school is involved. Each one is a community effort involving many different members of staff and parents led by the talented music teacher and in the case of "*Joseph*" with the Subject Leader for RE.

Pupils know how to stay healthy and develop confidence through achieving in the many sporting activities. The residential Activity week for Year 5 and 6 pupils give opportunities for learning social skills and living together with such activities as caving, abseiling and canoeing. Specialist tuition, including fencing, music, gymnastics, football taught as after-school clubs extend and enrich pupils' range of expertise, enjoyment and creativity. Foundation Stage pupils learned the wonder of creation growing their own

vegetables from seed, harvesting them and, after appropriate hygiene precautions eating them!

All pupils contribute to community celebrations and every child is involved in the Christmas production. It is entirely inclusive.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

During the past year school improvement has focused on raising standards in RE and strengthening the vision, ethos and mission of the school. In this they have been led by a recently appointed, thoroughly committed Headteacher, a dedicated Subject Leader and two new, enthusiastic Assistant heads.

The Subject Leader provides a role model of what it is to be a follower of Christ, generous of spirit and one who puts others' needs before her own. She is clear about the purpose of RE and the impact it has on the lives of pupils and adults in the school community. She provides guidance and support, modelling innovation, trying new practices and evaluating their impact on teaching and learning. She has put into place good quality systems and structures to ensure the effective teaching of the faith and the personal and spiritual development of pupils. There is, however, a need to develop consistency of high standards in teaching and learning to ensure improvement in all year groups. Self-evaluation procedures are being developed and there is a growing confidence and excitement about the teaching of RE.

Training needs are identified, regular meetings for assessment are programmed and resources are made available to support learning. Teachers new to the school follow an induction programme to ensure appropriate support. The RE curriculum contributes well to the moral and spiritual development of pupils.

The recent appointment of two new Assistant Heads has already made an impact on the systems and practice for supporting teachers and pupils, although these are still in the early stages of development. Communication is effective with daily meetings with the Headteacher, supporting the close monitoring of teaching and learning. Evaluating progress in RE is a core activity, with regular meetings between the Headteacher and the Subject Leader for RE. Their emphasis is building a picture of the individual learner to identify factors which support or hinder their learning. Teachers are able to observe pupils' behaviour as learners and identify strategies with the SENCO to address any relevant issues. As internal appointments, the Assistant Head Teachers are familiar with the vision and aims of the school and have the trust of their colleagues and the school community. They are, as Senior Leadership Team members, most proud of the pupils in their care whom they see as the school's greatest asset.

They view their task, shared by all, as nurturing pupils to become good people who can go out into the world and hold on to the values they have learned and lived.

Grade 2

