



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

School: St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
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URN: 109238  
DfES Number: 802 3349

Headteacher: Mrs Elisabeth Jeffery  
Chair of Governors: Mr Michael Flexman

Date of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> December 2007  
Date of previous inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> November 2003  
Reporting Inspector: Mr P Bates

## **Description of School**

St Joseph's is an average sized primary school situated in Portishead, North Somerset. It serves the needs of the parish of the same name. There are 210 pupils on roll of whom 56% are baptised Catholics. Most of the pupils come from relatively advantaged home backgrounds and are assessed as average or above when they enter the school. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The majority of pupils are from white European backgrounds. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is also below the national average.

### **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

St Joseph's is a very good Catholic school with many outstanding features. The school is well led by the Headteacher who has overseen the maintenance and growth of its strong Catholic ethos. Her vision and commitment are fully shared by governors, staff and parents. Collective worship and the spiritual and moral development of the pupils is excellent because of the extra care and opportunities built into the life of the whole community. Parents' comments are overwhelmingly supportive of the Catholic family ethos with its caring attitude towards every single child. The quality and provision in Religious Education is very good. Pupils make very good progress through the school and by the end of Key Stage 2 are achieving high standards. This is the result, in the most part, to good teaching that meets the needs of all the pupils. The leadership and management of the Headteacher, staff and governing body are a strength of the school.

**Grade: 1**

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

The school has successfully addressed the issues raised at the last inspection. Differentiated activities, particularly for the more able pupils, have been developed. Opportunities are given for these pupils to challenge their thinking and to produce pieces of extended writing. An audit of resources has taken place and there is a priority list of items that are purchased on an annual basis. There is a wide variety of religious books both in the central library and in the classrooms.

**Grade: 1**

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

The capacity to improve the Catholic life of the school and Religious Education further is excellent. Priorities are derived from the school's own accurate self-evaluation and are integrated into the School's Improvement Plan. The strong commitment of the headteacher, staff, governors and parish priest to the school is a large factor in the maintenance of existing good practice and further development.

**Grade: 1**

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

- 1 Ensure the more able pupils are consistently given extended tasks to enable them to meet their full potential.
- 2 Introduce the new assessment materials, including levelling of pupils' work, to improve the systems already in place.

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## **The Catholic Life of the School**

### **Leadership and Management**

The quality of leadership in relation to the Catholic life of this school is outstanding. The Headteacher gives dedicated leadership for the school community to live out their faith both as Headteacher and in her pivotal role as subject leader. She is well supported by a committed senior leadership team and a hard working staff. There is a clear understanding of the needs of the school community. The monitoring of the Catholic life of the school is effective with the RE Action Plan providing clear direction. The governing body fulfils its role very well in relation to the school's Catholic foundation. The parish priest is a regular and popular visitor to the school but visits to the church are limited because of its distance from the school. To ensure a close connection with the parish the pupils lead a Sunday Mass on a regular basis. The leadership very effectively promotes learners' spiritual and moral development and an outstanding ethos of Catholic life pervades the school. This is a Catholic school through and through.

**Grade: 1**

### **Collective Worship**

There is a wide variety of opportunity for prayer and collective worship throughout the school. Pupils respond to all forms of worship with respect and reverence. Music and very good singing enhance these occasions. Pupils pray regularly each day, before and after meals and during RE lessons. There is a regular programme of differing styles of assemblies in which the pupils are fully involved. During the assembly observed during the inspection, one pupil played the saxophone, all sang, there were children's own prayers and a period of reflection. It was well attended by parents. Opportunities exist at certain times of the year e.g. Advent and Easter, for pupils and staff to pray together during their lunch break. The staff also meet voluntarily every morning for a short period

of prayer and reflection.

Pupils learn the traditional prayers of the Church and write and say their own. They confidently contribute these during periods of worship. Each class has a patron saint whose feast day is celebrated with a Para liturgy containing prayers, stories, painting and drama. There are strong links with the parish and the pupils lead a monthly Family Mass in the parish church. They lead the prayers and often the Gospel choir provide the music. It is well supported by staff, pupils and parents. The school, parents and parish work closely together on the Sacramental Programme. Collective worship makes a very good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils.

**Grade: 1**

### **Community Cohesion**

When one pupil remarked “St Joseph’s is one big happy family” she was expressing the schools’ firm belief that all are equal and made in the image of God. There is an openness and welcome at the heart of the school which is clearly evident in the way the pupils work and interact together without apparent recognition of any differences between them. The RE curriculum gives pupils knowledge and understanding of other religions. School clubs are provided to enable pupils to participate together e.g. dance, drama, music and sports. Strong links have been established with other local schools, both primary and secondary, and pupils work with and compete against these schools. Pupils take part enthusiastically in numerous community projects; working with the Woodland Trust on environmental issues and with a local building company on the effects of development. The school has ‘eco-monitors’ who are selected by their peers to look at ways the school can help the environment. The pupils show generous support for local and world-wide charities. Members of the School Council take ideas from their peer group and decide a fund-raising focus for each term. Parents are welcomed into the school for numerous activities and they comment favourably on the warm welcome they receive from staff and pupils. The school has a deep awareness of its relationship with the parish community and actively support many parish events.

**Grade: 1**

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## **Religious Education**

### **Achievement and Standards in Religious Education**

The quality of provision for Religious Education is very good. The teaching, the Catholic life and ethos which pervades the school ensure that pupils achieve well and make very good progress in knowledge and understanding. By the end of Key Stage 1 standards are above average and pupils show a good knowledge of stories from both the Old and New Testament. Their knowledge of a range of prayers is developing. By Year 6 pupils have reached a very good standard in both their written and oral work. They are able to recount various stories from the Bible and understand the messages they contain. “Everyone is equal, Jesus is here for everyone” was a pupils spontaneous response to why it was shepherds who visited baby Jesus. Standards expected in literacy are transferred to work in RE. There is a need to regularly monitor work, particularly at Key

Stage 2, to ensure that differentiated activities are being used consistently to challenge the pupils, particularly the more able. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons, work hard and behave well both in lessons and around the school. Pupil's spiritual and moral development is clearly rooted in the teachings of Jesus and the beliefs of the Catholic Church and they are learning how these apply to their own lives. They learn that they should respect themselves, each other and those in the wider world.

**Grade: 2**

### **Teaching and learning in Religious Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers use a variety of teaching styles to enable pupils to learn well, become thinking learners and enjoy their RE lessons. The lessons generally move at a good pace and questioning is good. The provision for pupils with differing abilities is well considered with work which is well matched to their needs. Pupils receive very good support from the capable Teaching Assistants. In lessons, pupils are suitably challenged, learning objectives are clear and shared with the pupils. Art, role play, music and drama are successfully incorporated into the teaching of RE. In one lesson where abstract pictures were being created, a pupil gave a deeply spiritual reply when asked to describe his picture "I'm creating a prayer to God." By the upper end of Key Stage 2 pupils are given challenging independent work which they relish. Written work develops as pupils progress through the school. Marking is positive and at times, developmental. Good assessment practices are in place and these will be enhanced when the new levelling system is embedded.

**Grade: 1**

### **Quality of the Curriculum**

The curriculum in RE is well planned and follows the diocesan "Here I Am" scheme. It fulfils the requirements of the Bishops' Conference with 10% of curriculum time devoted to Religious Education. The curriculum provides a broad range of opportunities meeting the needs, interests and aptitudes of all pupils including those with special educational needs. Pupils are encouraged to become independent learners. The curriculum provides for the very good prayer life of the school. There are good links with the parish which support parents in helping pupils prepare for the reception of the sacraments. There is a planned programme of teaching about other faiths and cultures and there is a good supply of resources to support this. Pupils show an awareness and understanding of various religions. At least one in-service day per year is provided to support the teaching of Religious Education. The most recent day 'Seeking the face of Christ' was very successful. It focused on God in all things, and looked at ethos, personal faith, prayer and worship. After consultation with the governors and parents the school has introduced the diocesan Personal Relationship Scheme "In the Beginning". This is monitored by the subject leader with support from the Science co-ordinator.

**Grade: 1**

### **Leadership and management of Religious Education**

Leadership and management in Religious Education is excellent. The Headteacher, who is also subject leader, sets a clear direction and ensures that Religious Education has a

very high profile in the school. She is the key to the achievements of the pupils and the excellent provision for the Catholic life of the school. The whole staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are committed to their role in support of the Catholic ethos of the school and the teaching of the faith. The subject leader supports the staff in their teaching, monitors planning, carries out work sampling and does some observations. There is no formal induction process for new staff in RE, but they are given support when the need arises. The subject leader, together with the other staff, support close links with the parish and work together in preparing for Masses, running sacramental programmes and liturgical services both in church and in school. Resources are of a very good standard and are being continuously developed. There are vibrant attractive prayer areas in all the classes and quality religious displays are to be seen around the school. The parish priest, who is also the link governor for Religious Education, is a regular visitor and has recently worked closely with the subject leader on producing child friendly homilies at Mass. The impact of the leadership of the subject is evident in the quality of teaching and learning and the progress made by the pupils.

**Grade: 1**