



INSPECTION REPORT

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

St Joseph's Place, Devizes SN101DD

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URN Number: 126488

Headteacher: Mrs Sheila Jones

Chair of Governors: Mr K Maidment

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: 20 & 21 May 2008

Date of previous inspection: June 2003

Reporting Inspector: Mrs A Fowler

Description of School

St Joseph's is a slightly smaller than average Catholic VA primary school serving the Parish of the Immaculate Conception. The catchment area is the town of Devizes and the surrounding villages. Pupils come from a wide range of socio economic backgrounds but are mainly white British. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and with English as an additional language is below average. The school has recently suffered from a period of disruption with some major staff changes. The school is popular with parents who are very supportive of its ethos. The school has close links with the Catholic secondary school, St Augustine's in Trowbridge.

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 good Catholic school. The distinctive nature of the school is apparent in the visible signs around the school, in the welcome expressed to visitors and in the behaviour of the whole community who strive to live by the values of the Gospel. Parents are very happy with the school which they see as supportive and most have made a positive choice for the school as a faith community. One parent commenting that "All the children are taught that whatever they do they are loved" and "the positive attitude of everyone means that children achieve their best both socially and academically." Self evaluation is accurate and realistic. The school is committed to improving standards. Pupils' spiritual, moral and personal development is excellent with, according to the pupils themselves, very little evidence of bullying. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for each other with older pupils looking after younger pupils and for aspects of school life through the school council.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

All requirements of the last inspection have either been met fully or are part of a long term development plan. The school is to be congratulated for the improvement in the development of the prayer life of the school which now fully involves pupils.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school's own self evaluation is accurate and realistic. The leadership provide good role models and inspire confidence. The whole staff team are committed to raising standards and to developing the ethos of the school and a development strategy is in place which should ensure that this happens. The school enjoys the support of both parents and pupils and is well placed therefore to improve even further.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further and structure clearly the role of Sr David Lewis to enhance both the religious life of the school and the links with the parish community
- Continue to develop and further enhance the use of assessment for learning strategies
- Continue to develop and further enhance the design of written tasks to reflect the full range of assessment levels and challenge the most able pupils to make greater progress

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The school is a place of optimism, hope and enthusiasm; it promotes high standards of behaviour and leaders actively seek to consult the views of pupils, staff and parents. There is a strong focus on raising standards. Visitors to the school feel welcomed and the school enjoys the support of parents who value the work of the school. There is a strong sense of family within the school community. Governors play an active role in the school and understand the responsibilities of a governing body; they wish to further develop their understanding of the role of foundation governors. The mission statement, "creating with the help of God, a loving and learning community within which every child will flourish" is well understood by the whole community and staff model through their own actions the care and concern they wish pupils to show. RE is seen as a core subject and figures prominently on the development plan. The catholic life of the school is monitored and evaluated on a regular basis through generally observations, discussions and questionnaires to pupils. Staff are offered the opportunity for Inset and provision for induction is good.

Grade 2

The Prayer Life of the School

Since the last inspection the prayer life of the school has improved considerably and is now outstanding. Prayer underpins the life of the school and draws upon a wide range of styles and resources. It celebrates the liturgical life of the church as well as offering many informal opportunities for prayer. Liturgy is designed to be inclusive and takes account of the age and faith development of pupils. Students are fully involved in assemblies with older pupils responsible for the planning and delivery of assemblies for younger years. In one of the assemblies observed year 6 pupils had researched and planned an assembly reflecting the feast of Corpus Christi, writing their own play and prayers, choosing music and designing actions to go with the music. Previously the pupils had performed a 'living Stations of the Cross' and their reflection on this revealed their depth of understanding and empathy. They were able to talk confidently and reflect meaningfully on their theme. Most music and hymns used in prayer are accompanied by actions which enhance the meaning and ensure that all pupils can contribute irrespective of their musical ability. During class prayers observed, pupils were respectful contributed to the prayers and appeared to make connections between what was being said and their own behaviour. This connection between faith and life was constantly reinforced by staff in the opportunities for prayer both formal and informal which occurred throughout the inspection. In the Mass for year four, pupils were involved in the liturgy and several parents attended. The Mass took place in the outdoor classroom which is a well designed area which lends itself to reflection. The liturgy was designed with the needs of younger pupils in mind and the priest's homily was directed specifically to the pupils and was able to refer meaningfully to the topics studied by pupils in Religious Education. The school enjoys a good relationship with the local parish priest who attends the school on a regular basis and actively helps in the planning, his insight is to be welcomed. Pupils' formal understanding of

the liturgy needs developing. The school supports the first communion programme in the parish by making their facilities available. The school is in the process of enhancing its relationship with the parish through the use of for example shared newsletters. This work on the part of the parish and school is to be commended and both school and parish encouraged to put strategies in place to further strengthen links. The School has the opportunity in Sr David Lewis in further developing the prayer life of the school and relationships with the parish. Sr Lewis a former RE coordinator is able to act in a chaplaincy role for the school and this role needs to be strengthened and enhanced. The spiritual and moral development of pupils is excellent and the prayer life of the school clearly contributes to this. The varied charity programme shows the commitment of the pupils to putting Gospel Values into action.

Grade 1

Community Cohesion

The school has a coherent set of values, based on the Gospel, which are understood and lived out by all. The school is a welcoming place and this is commented on by parents and visitors to the school. The inclusion of all learners is a central goal. The Every Child Matters agenda is well developed and understood from a Catholic perspective. Pupils are encouraged to develop their social and cultural awareness and understanding. Pupils are encouraged to develop their understanding of citizenship by taking responsibility for the running of the school through the school council and the way older pupils mentor younger ones. One of the pupils is a representative on the young people's forum in Devizes. Pupils are also encouraged to take responsibility for the environment by taking part in recycling and composting projects. Through the schools charity programme pupils are helped to develop their appreciation of other cultures and develop empathy for the problems of others, they contribute to various cafod appeals and have a particular link with Mbula a pupil in Kenya. Pupils are also encouraged to take part in events supporting the local community. As an example of their work supporting the local community the pupils have taken part in the Carnival Procession and the Christmas Lantern Procession. Pupils awareness of and respect for other faith communities is developed through the RE programme and specific topics. This work needs to be strengthened and further developed. Community links are also enhanced by the use of the school premise in hosting and supporting various groups including yoga and the local opera group. The school already sees as a priority the need to further strengthen links with other schools.

Grade 2

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

The school has done considerable work in developing the use of both assessment levels and assessment for learning techniques. These have contributed to rising standards. There is however still a dichotomy between pupils oral work and their written work. The pupils are above average in their emotional and oral responses to the work and demonstrate particularly good progress in attainment target two, 'learning from'. They are encouraged to make connections between faith and life and consider how what they are learning applies to their own lives. They have a good grasp of symbolism and are able to talk articulately about Gospel stories and their meaning. There is a difference between written standards in RE and in Literacy but the school is fully aware of this and has plans in place to address this issue. Marking shows signs of

becoming more diagnostic although this isn't always the case. Within literacy the use of success criteria, more diagnostic marking and tasks which make use of a range of thinking skills all contribute to increased confidence in written work, this is now beginning to show itself within some of the RE work and strategies to do this on a more consistent basis are in place and should raise standards.

Grade 3

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

None of the teaching observed was less than good and some examples of outstanding practice were observed. Lessons observed were well planned and resourced. Pupils enjoy the lessons and welcome the opportunity to ask questions. The technique of allowing pupils to discuss their thoughts with a partner or a small group before sharing their answer with the class is well embedded in the school and not only allows the pupils thinking time but ensures the quality of discussion is high. Pupils are able to work independently if required and when working in groups or with a partner demonstrate a high level of maturity and stay focussed on the task. Where lessons are at their best the pace is brisk and lessons are structured to encourage pupils to use a range of techniques to improve their learning. In a year three lesson for example which took closely as its theme 'Who is my neighbour' pupils were shown a powerpoint portraying different images but asked to write down on a small board, what they noticed, what was common etc. this ensured the task was an active one rather than just passively watching the images. Their eventual responses to the questions who is my neighbour and what did Jesus do to show he loved his neighbour were reflective and showed a sophisticated understanding and an ability both to draw on previous learning and to make connections with other areas. The use of concept maps observed in the lessons also enhanced the learning. Support assistants are an integral part of the lesson and make a valuable contribution to the learning process.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The curriculum fulfils the requirements of the curriculum directory with RE with RE receiving ten percent of curriculum time. The school uses 'Here I am' as the basis of its RE syllabus. The Relationship Education Curriculum is in the process of being developed with the school planning to implement the 'In the Beginning' programme which is a scheme recommended by the diocese. Pupils are invited during the lessons to use a variety of skills including, empathy, investigation, research, oral work and imagination. They enjoy their lessons and take an active part within them. Differentiation takes place through the amount of support pupils are given, this involves making good use of support assistants, or by structuring the tasks differently for different groups of pupils. The school has identified the need to develop more evaluative pieces of work and work that stretches the more gifted and talented pupils. The curriculum makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils are taught about other faiths and to respect other faiths although this is an area which is still in the developing stage.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The RE coordinators are committed to developing the vision of the subject and to raising standards. The head and the coordinators lead by example and provide training, resources and support for colleagues. Observations of lessons take place and books are monitored. There is scope for improving the frequency with which this happens and being clearer about the impact of book trawls. RE is seen as priority within the school with planning taking place at staff meeting. Staff feel that they are supported and guided. The subject is well resourced. Priorities for the subject are clearly identified and a development plan is in place. The RE leadership is

focused on using new initiatives to raise standards. The school's self review is accurate and informed. The coordinators consult the views of pupils and parents. Assessment levels are beginning to be used and the coordinator is building up a portfolio of pupils' work to help with consistency in levelling.

Grade 2