



St Joseph's Catholic Junior School

School Street, Birtley, Chester le Street, DH3 2PN

School Unique Reference Number: **108388**

Inspection dates: 20 – 21 June 2019

Lead inspector: Jill Burgess

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Religious Education:		Outstanding	1
Collective Worship:		Outstanding	1

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Joseph's Catholic Junior School is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- This is a joyous, cohesive school community where everyone involved displays the highest expectations for pupils in terms of personal, spiritual and academic development.
- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. The mission statement of the school 'Christ is our light and our Life' is reflected in the varied opportunities pupils have within school and beyond sharing their faith with others.
- Religious Education is outstanding as all staff ensure a consistent and high quality approach to their teaching. As a result, pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons and they have a well-developed understanding of the curriculum.
- Collective Worship is outstanding as pupils experience prayer in many forms and pupils are adept at planning and leading spiritual gatherings independently.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Joseph's is a smaller than average junior school with 114 pupils on roll.
- Currently, 73% of pupils are baptised Catholic, 9% are pupils from other World Faiths and 18% of pupils have no religious affiliation.
- The majority of pupils are of white British heritage.
- Presently, 22% of pupils have additional special needs.
- Additional to four class teachers, the school employs four full-time teaching assistants and one part-time teaching assistant.
- Due to planned visits during this inspection, lessons observations and pupil discussions did not involve year 6. However, book scrutiny included a range of Religious Education books from year 6 pupils.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- further develop the Catholic Life of the school by:
 - strengthening the teaching of relationships and sex education by reviewing current practice and policy in light of the newly published diocesan guidelines.
- further develop Religious Education by:
 - continuing to develop and embed the new framework for assessment, ensuring that all pupils continue to make good and accelerated progress.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- Pupils are active participants in the Catholic Life and mission of the school. They take on numerous roles within this vibrant community with energy and enthusiasm. Pupils have the opportunity to engage in a variety of groups including Mini Vinnies, school council, the Fairtrade group and spiritual dance group. Year 6 pupils also have the chance to participate in the Faith in Action Pin Award. As a result pupils, staff, parents and governors hold a strong belief that there is, '...something for everyone here'.
- Due to their wide-ranging fundraising activities, such as supporting People's Kitchen, McMillan Coffee mornings and their involvement in the Christmas Shoe-Box Appeal, pupils at St Joseph's know they can make a difference. Through their in-school questionnaire returns, a number of pupils echoed the view expressed by one pupil, 'Our school is different because we look for people to help. We don't wait.'
- Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development. Consequently pupils are happy, confident and secure in their own stage of spiritual and emotional growth. After school enrichment activities further support the development of skills and talents which then feed into the school day, for example, singing club and debating club.
- The behaviour of almost all pupils is exemplary at all times and the cultivation and expectation of positive relationships is a clear strength of the school.
- Pupils deeply value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and, as a result, are keen to forge links across the parish, within their cluster of schools and within the diocese.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The school's mission statement, 'Christ is our life and our light', is known and respected by all. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities to ensure this mission is modelled in every interaction and the impact of this is clear and evident in the positive relationships across the whole school community. This responsibility is mirrored by pupils. One pupil commented, 'We are all very loving because we were created by God and we want to follow in his footsteps.'
- This school exists as a small community but it operates with a significant sense of ambition. A genuine recognition and appreciation of the need for mutual respect is evident in this calm, vibrant and purposeful school.

- Pastoral care is given the highest priority and staff speak of knowing each pupil well and being alert to any slight changes in relationships or friendship groups. This means issues can be tackled swiftly and positively and as a result pupils demonstrate a clear level of resilience. When asked what happens if things go wrong with friendships at St Joseph's pupils responded that, 'Friends who fall out, come back together very quickly.'
- Time and effort is also devoted to the spiritual development of staff. Staff meetings begin with prayer and reflection and staff needs are understood and catered for.
- The school's Catholic character is evident in the range of high quality displays, which promote the school ethos and expectations as well as celebrating school achievement.
- Pastoral programmes, personal, social and health education and relationships and sex education are appropriate, drawing on a range of resources. However, the school needs to review current practice in light of new guidance.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher and Religious Education coordinator, promote a focus on stewardship and as a result empower pupils to believe they can really make a difference in their immediate locality and beyond. This ambition filters to all those involved in school life with a palpable energy and vigour.
- The school's leadership ensure that the development of Catholic Life remains at the heart of all school activities and there is a deep sense of commitment and responsibility to share this mission with all connected to the school.
- Self-evaluation is robust and embedded, highlighting the importance given to pupil voice and the drive to explore new opportunities to collaborate with others. Annual parent questionnaires are also used to inform future developments.
- The governing body make a significant contribution in the area. Extending opportunities to develop the Catholic Life of the school is an ongoing school improvement priority and governors enjoy working directly with pupils to enhance and assess the range of opportunities offered. Regular updates are also provided in the headteacher's termly report to governors. The deacon is a regular visitor to school. He supports liturgy, sacramental preparation and actively involves the school community in parish life.
- As the school ensures feedback from a wide variety of sources, it is well placed to plan targeted improvements to enhance the communal life and ethos of the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding.

- The quality of learning is outstanding as there is a high level of engagement from pupils and almost all pupils are fully engaged in lessons. Pupils recognise Religious Education as one of their most important lessons.
- Behaviour for learning is a strength as pupils maintain concentration well, demonstrating an enthusiasm to be fully involved throughout the duration of lessons.
- Evidence across a range of books shows that pupils progress well from their starting points. The detail of pupils' work increases as the year progresses, in line with year group expectations. Presentation of work is of a high standard.
- Pupils talk with confidence about their work. They are fully aware of their own performance regarding Religious Education lessons and what they need to do to improve. When discussing next steps, they focus on their Religious Education knowledge and skills incorporating key driver phrases. All classes observed demonstrated an ease and confidence when using appropriate religious vocabulary.
- Pupils with additional needs are extremely well supported and additional adults are deployed to ensure the best possible progress for all pupils is maintained. From September 2019, one member of support staff will undertake a year-long course in emotional literacy support.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.

- Teachers have both an excellent level of subject knowledge and grasp of individual pupil performance. As a result, they consistently plan high quality lessons linked to pupils' current attainment.
- Senior leaders ensure that assemblies and Collective Worship enhance the Religious Education curriculum encouraging pupils to make links between scripture and the lives and actions of Christians.
- A range of strategies is employed during lessons, including individual and collaborative work. Talk partners and group discussion time is embedded into lesson delivery, for example, in year 4 pupils were asked how they would feel if they were chosen by Jesus to be a disciple. Responses such as, 'not worthy', 'honoured', 'curious' and 'grateful', were supported by more detailed answers after an in-depth and on-task group conversation. This was followed by a hot-seating activity where one pupil was questioned 'in role'. In

year 3, pupils explored the story of the Prodigal Son and showed confidence linking this parable to others Jesus had told, demonstrating wider knowledge of scripture. Writing a version of the Beatitudes for younger pupils in school, one year 5 pupil confidently linked aspects of her current work with a previous lesson on the painting 'The Light of the World'.

- Book scrutiny shows a consistent and rigorous approach to the teaching of Religious Education. The school has a range of assessment for learning strategies in place, including a contents sheet at the start of each topic, which highlights the skills the pupils will be covering as well as a self-assessment tool for some key pieces of work. This ensures clarity and transparency for pupils.
- The school was part of the diocesan pilot for the new framework for assessment and has made significant progress implementing a new approach. Further development is required however to fully embed the new age related standards framework.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding.

- Leaders and governors ensure that as a core subject Religious Education is given adequate professional development time and is allocated appropriate resources to maintain high quality lessons and pupil performance.
- Leaders have been successful in ensuring Religious Education is creative and engaging by conducting regular lesson observations, book scrutiny and listening to the views of pupils.
- This rigorous monitoring by senior leaders together with a desire to continually self-challenge has led to a focus on sustained high quality teaching. This small staff share good practice and ideas for development regularly with the intention of improving learning experiences for pupils. Within this approach planning is explored to ensure the differing needs of pupils are adequately met to ensure the progress of all.
- Sacramental preparation is a strength of the school demonstrating the close partnership between home, school and parish.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Pupils fully understand how to behave during Collective Worship. They demonstrate a keenness to contribute, a deep respect for themes explored, a readiness to respond with silence and, when called upon, they participate with joyful singing. Collective Worship is clearly a regular and fundamental aspect of school life.
- Pupils' confidence and readiness to engage in spontaneous prayer is particularly impressive. Pupils are encouraged to focus on four main elements of prayer: adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplications (ACTS). This well established pattern of prayer is replicated at every focus prayer area around school and pupils readily respond to the invitation to pray independently.
- Opportunities to pray extend into the school's prayer garden. Pupils are invited to make use of the area during playtimes or lunchtimes if they wish to talk unprompted, quietly and privately to God.
- Discussions with pupils confirm they have an excellent understanding of the church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts. They recall with enthusiasm the range of liturgies and faith celebrations in which they have been involved.
- Pupils draw on a variety of traditional and contemporary approaches to prayer and are able to justify their reasons for selecting different styles of worship. Liturgical dance is one of the many well-developed aspects and is used to powerful effect.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Pupils' response to Collective Worship highlights it is central to the life of the school. Whatever their own faith background participation is wholehearted. Praying together, either through traditional prayers or through meditation is a daily occurrence.
- Collective Worship has a clear message, purpose and direction. Themes are not explored in isolation. They are in-tune with Church celebrations, for example, with a focus on the Holy Spirit linked to Pentecost or with the year 5 led liturgy, the statement of the week – 'I try to love others as I love myself.' Key points covered are reinforced during subsequent lessons and pupil interactions during the course of the day.

- Staff are highly skilled role models and are adept at encouraging and subtly supporting pupils to plan and lead Collective Worship with increasing independence. Senior leaders commented that self-evaluation and pupil feedback highlighted this as an area of focus. School is now rightly proud of the increased skills set of pupils.
- Pupils are aided in their planning of Collective Worship through the provision of high quality, easily accessible resources on hand in every classroom and displayed in focused prayer areas.
- The enthusiastic involvement in Collective Worship extends beyond pupils. Parents and governors talk of the large numbers who respond to invitations to pray and celebrate together during high quality liturgies where difference is celebrated.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Leaders and governors place the highest priority on the school's self-evaluation of Collective Worship with regular reviews of school performance.
- Leaders use their wealth of experience to plan and deliver quality Collective Worship. They are keen to pass on this knowledge and a range of techniques to pupils so they in turn, can provide support to peers. This is evident in the liturgical dance group, for example, where older pupils work with and train younger pupils. As a result Collective Worship is a real strength of the school.
- Overall there is a cohesive and purposeful approach to prayerful gatherings. Themes explored are directly linked to school action through a number of questions, 'What does this mean for us? What should we do now to make a positive change? How does this now help us make the right choice?' The idea of making the right choice features heavily in subsequent discussions with pupils who are always thoughtful and reflective in their responses.
- The professional development of staff is an on-going priority. Emphasis on the training of staff and the sharing of good practice are core features of the school.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

HOW EFFECTIVE THE SCHOOL IS IN PROVIDING CATHOLIC EDUCATION:**1****CATHOLIC LIFE:****1**

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

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The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**1**

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

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The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

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How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**1**

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.

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The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

1

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Joseph's Catholic Junior School
Unique reference number	108388
Local authority	Gateshead
This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt Reverend Robert Byrne the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle under canon 806 of Canon Law. For voluntary aided schools it also fulfils the responsibility the governing body has to inspect the school under s48 of the Education Act 2005.	
Chair of governors	Mrs Victoria Lappin
Headteacher	Mrs Christina McDermott
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