



St Joseph's Catholic Junior School

School Street, Birtley, Co.Durham, DH3 2PN

URN: 108388

Inspection dates: 17 – 18 September 2013
Lead inspector: Mrs Nora Moffatt

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS	PREVIOUS INSPECTION:	Good	2
	THIS INSPECTION:	Outstanding	1
	CATHOLIC LIFE:	Outstanding	1
	COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:	Outstanding	1
	RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:	Outstanding	1

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

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

- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding because the mission statement is at the heart of the work of the school and is clearly put into action each day by both staff and pupils, providing the whole community with opportunities to develop and grow in faith together.
- Religious Education (RE) at the school is outstanding because all pupils achieve high levels in RE and enjoy their learning.
- The Collective Worship of the school is outstanding because staff and pupils plan and lead prayer opportunities with reverence and a palpable sense of joy, especially when joining in communal singing.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- St Joseph's is smaller than the average sized junior school.
- An average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children in care of the local authority and children of service families.
- An above average proportion of pupils are supported at school action. An average proportion of pupils are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school has achieved the Healthy School status, the Basic Skills and the Gateshead Sports Mark awards.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently differentiate tasks effectively to meet the variety of pupil needs, particularly the more able.
 - ensuring that marking consistently provides information to pupils about how to improve their work and that pupils are given time to respond.

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 and fully inclusive of all.
- Pupils have a deep sense of belonging and are rightly proud of their school. They thrive in an atmosphere where everyone plays an equal part in the Catholic Life of the school.
- Pupils have numerous opportunities to take on areas of responsibility in and out of school such as pupil buddies, Heads of House/school and running a Fair Trade tuck shop.
- Pupils participate joyfully in a variety of events in school, in the parish and at diocesan level.
- They have a good understanding of how people can have a vocation by being active in the life of the parish. This has resulted in pupils playing their own part in improving their school life, that of the local community and globally.
- Pupils discuss moral issues in classes and proactively make a difference where they can, from cleaning the local area to supporting a school in Gambia.
- Pupil behaviour is exemplary at all times.
- All pupils are supportive of each other evidenced through the buddy system and general level of respect shown to each other in lessons and around the school. Pupils will happily claim theirs is the best school in Birtley....in Gateshead.....in the world! As a result pupils thrive.

- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.
- The mission statement, 'Christ is our light and our life' is embedded across the curriculum and throughout all of school life. The staff are passionate about its implementation.
- Excellent relationships exist between all staff, governors, parents and pupils. Everyone is mutually supportive and goes about their work joyfully.
- The learning environment reflects the school's mission and celebrates the school's Catholic character with vibrant displays and prayerful spaces.
- Clear policies and structures are in place to provide the highest level of care to all pupils

and staff equally, whatever their level of need.

- High expectations of behaviour are promoted by all staff and pupils alike. Behaviour policies are rooted in gospel values; they encourage everyone to be responsible for an atmosphere of justice and reconciliation. Personal social and health education is delivered very effectively through class discussions and use of 'Statements to Live By'. The relationship and sex education programme is delivered throughout the school at age appropriate levels following the 'All That I Am' programme.

- Leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school highly effectively.
- The school's leadership is deeply committed to the church's mission in the school. They have a clear vision which is shared effectively. They are an inspiration to all.
- Catholic Life is given the highest possible priority by leaders. There is a firm belief from leaders and staff that the success of the school is built upon the strength in this area.
- School self evaluation shows there is rigorous monitoring and continual self challenge. This ensures well planned improvements.
- There is a shared vision of, 'only the best is good enough' which is supported by all.
- The school is extremely successful in working with parents and carers and, in turn, they are extremely supportive of the school.
- The governing body share in the high expectations of the school and lead by example, playing an active role in the Catholic Life of the school. A recent visit to Gambia by the chair of governors has resulted in links being forged with a school there. St Joseph's now carries out fundraising to offer vital financial support. The whole school community are rightly proud of this initiative.
- Governors share the headteacher's and staff's passion to excel and offer excellent challenge and support where necessary. They are regular visitors to school and part of the decision making process. They contribute effectively to whole school self-evaluation and for RE in particular.

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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- The pupils' response to and participation in the school's Collective Worship is outstanding.
- Collective Worship engages all pupils' interest and inspires them to reflect and respond reverently and with joy.
- Pupils plan and lead Collective Worship for each 'Come and See' topic at age appropriate levels. They are able to use a variety of approaches to prayer in a range of settings. For example year six (Y6) pupils prepare and lead the Collective Worship for each 'Come and See' topic, while younger children develop this skill through the use of Collective Worship resource boxes.
- Almost all pupils have an excellent understanding of the liturgical year and expressed enjoyment of various seasons and feasts. They particularly enjoyed the travelling crib during Advent and the Way of the Cross during Lent.
- There is a deep sense of respect for different faiths. Pupils from other backgrounds participate in Collective Worship and also willingly share their own beliefs in an atmosphere where they are accepted and appreciated.
- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding.
- Collective Worship is central to the life of the school and at the heart of every event and celebration. Praying together is a natural part of the school day for all staff and pupils.
- Collective Worship is planned for and resourced very effectively. As a result, Collective Worship is of a high quality and pupils are motivated to add resources and to continually improve the quality of provision. The resource boxes for Collective Worship grow as children bring in items from home to add to them. Children enjoy prayer both in the classroom and in the surrounding area.
- The themes chosen for Collective Worship reflect a deep understanding of the liturgical year.
- Prayer opportunities are stimulating, attracting adult participation. Parents and carers expressed a joy in the Collective Worship which has them 'hooked', and wanting to come back for more. So much so that they then go on to become catechists within the parish.
- Teachers are skilled at enabling pupils to lead Collective Worship. They have a thorough understanding of the forms prayer can take and are increasingly creative in how they pray

with pupils.

- Leadership and management of Collective Worship is outstanding. Leaders have an expert knowledge of how to plan and deliver opportunities for prayer and they have shared this effectively with staff and pupils.
- Collective Worship is delivered in a way that is relevant to pupils, using both traditional and contemporary music and their response is outstanding. For example in years five and six Collective Worship, Adele's "Make You Feel My Love" was used alongside more traditional hymns to give the children an understanding of what God's love means.
- Continual professional development is promoted for all staff, reflecting the high priority attached to it. Continual improvement is at the heart of the leaders' vision to ensure outstanding Collective Worship for all. Staff are highly receptive and enthusiastic about moving forward together.
- Leaders are exceptional role models for how Collective Worship should be delivered to staff, pupils and parents.
- Leaders regularly review Collective Worship throughout the school. They are keen to discuss the views of pupils and parents and quick to respond in a thorough way.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

- 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 monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

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- Pupils spoke with passion about their enjoyment of Religious Education (RE) and their desire to always do their best. They understand RE is a core lesson and its importance in the life of the school.
- Almost all pupils concentrate very well, even when working independently. Behaviour is outstanding throughout the school.
- From broadly average starting points, almost all pupils make rapid and sustained progress. They learn exceptionally well and are keen to do their best at all times. They develop a wide range of skills to great effect
- Creative lessons, where children are challenged to think deeply and extend their knowledge and understanding, results in the vast majority of pupils achieving extremely well by the end of key stage two (KS2). A Y6 pupil was extremely articulate in describing unconditional love in this way: 'There are no ifs or buts, love has no conditions.'
- Due to the state of transition in level expectations across all of diocesan schools, the current averages for attainment and progress are not reliable benchmarks. Therefore no judgement will be made in this report against diocesan averages for either attainment or progress.
- Teaching is good with some outstanding elements. The school shares good practice effectively to ensure continual improvement and consistency.
- Over time, all groups including those with special educational needs make good progress.
- Teachers have high expectations and are enthusiastic about RE. They are confident in using the 'Come and See' programme to plan and deliver good lessons. Within lessons, time is usually used effectively to maximise learning opportunities. For example in year three children were using a letter from St Paul to create a recipe for a happy home just as they might make a recipe for a cake.
- In the best lessons pupils' understanding is checked and timely intervention strategies used to ensure quality learning takes place.
- Best practice shows work being differentiated to meet the needs of individual pupils. This is not yet consistently the case across the school nor is it yet fully embedded in all classrooms.
- Marking and feedback are not yet used consistently and nor is time always given to allow

pupils to respond to feedback given. Therefore not all pupils, particularly the more able, are enabled to achieve their full potential.

- Teachers use praise and celebration of achievements very well in lessons, using a house point system and also in the weekly celebration assembly each Friday.
- Leaders' self-analysis gives an accurate picture of school achievement based on rigorous monitoring and a drive to continually improve the provision for RE. Planning for improvement is well targeted and leads to outstanding outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders demonstrate a high level of expertise in RE. They are relentless in striving to deliver the best possible outcomes for their pupils. As a result teaching is generally good and sometimes outstanding.
- The headteacher is outstanding in inspiring confidence and commitment from pupils, parents and colleagues. There is a strong belief that it is RE which underpins the school's success in all areas.
- The moral and spiritual development of the pupils is outstanding, resulting in them striving to identify their own vocations.
- The RE curriculum is taught using 'Come and See' resources imaginatively to stimulate pupils and to effectively ensure continuity and progression.
- Numerous links have been forged within the parish, the local and global community. The school works closely with other Catholic primary schools for festivals such as Harvest and at Easter. Cookery club is supported with donations from a local shop. Pupils care for their area, keeping it free from litter, especially around the homes of the more elderly members of the community. The school regularly supports the People's Kitchen. The school is committed to making a difference to a school in Gambia through energetic fundraising initiatives.
- The school uses its resources effectively to provide teaching assistant support in each classroom for all subjects, including RE. Curriculum professional development is offered to all staff within the school and at diocesan level. RE is well resourced as it has the highest subject profile in the school.
- Diocesan guidelines for Sacramental preparation are followed and received enthusiastically by parents and pupils. The priest and deacon work very effectively with catechists, parents and pupils. Pupils of all faiths attend the training sessions. Parents speak enthusiastically of the renewed passion it has given them, encouraging them to go on to become catechists themselves.

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.

1

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

1

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

1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:

1

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

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship

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

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

1

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

1

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education

2

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

1

SCHOOL DETAILS

Unique reference number	108388
Local authority	Gateshead

This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Séamus Cunningham the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese, (c.f. Code Canon Law, 804, 806), and for the Governing Body of the school (Education Act 2005, Section 48). The inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.

Type of school	Junior
Chair of governors	Mrs Sheila Gallagher
Head teacher	Mrs Christina McDermott
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