



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

School: St Joseph's RC Primary School  
Address: Stacksteads, Bacup  
Telephone: 01706 873177  
e-mail address: head@st-josephs-bacup.lancs.sch.uk  
URN: 119661

Headteacher: Mrs Jan Gibson  
Chair of Governors: Mr Oliver Finnegan

---

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Salford  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

---

Date of inspection: March 2011  
Date of previous inspection: November 2007  
Reporting Inspector: Mrs Margaret Dolan

## **Information about the school**

St Joseph's is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parish of St Joseph and St Peter. It is situated in the Rossendale Valley in Stacksteads, close to the town centre of Bacup. The area has a high rate of unemployment and many of the inhabitants have to travel to find work. There is a high level of mobility in and out of the area which has a direct impact on the school. The vast majority of pupils are of white British background. There are currently 79 pupils on roll aged 4-11 years. 46% are baptised Roman Catholic. The percentage of children eligible for free school meals is above national average (34%) as is the percentage with special educational needs/disabilities (22%) and 1 child has a statement of special educational need. Attainment on entry into reception class is broadly average and pupils leave with broadly average progress although this is improving.

There are 4 full time and 1 part time teachers of whom 2 are Catholic. 40% of teachers have the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies or equivalent. This is a small school and there has been a relatively high turnover of staff since 2008 but despite this the Catholic ethos has been maintained.

## **Overall Effectiveness**

**Grade 2**

The overall effectiveness of the school is good. The school works hard to ensure a good Religious Education for all the children and the spiritual life of the school is very good. Mass is celebrated in school monthly and assemblies are well planned and presented reflecting the liturgical year. Behaviour is very good and the children are polite and well mannered.

Religious Education is monitored well with regular assessments, observations and book scrutinies. Teachers plan well to encourage the children to participate fully in their Religious Education and technology, including whiteboards, are used to enhance the provision. Attainment shows signs of even further improvement.

The very committed headteacher, senior leadership team and the governing body are keen to develop the religious life of the school. Governors are supportive and enthusiastic and visit the school regularly to witness the school's Catholic ethos and its religious, spiritual and moral focus. The school is keen to develop global and community links.

## **Capacity for sustained improvement**

**Grade 2**

Since the last inspection, the school has established a very comprehensive system for monitoring and evaluation. Children's work is assessed and levelled and the Religious Education subject leader keeps all the information in a well organised curriculum file.

Strategies for the monitoring of teaching and learning are in place, and regular classroom observations, as well as work scrutinies have established guidelines for staff. The developing partnership with the Religious Education link governor will further enhance this provision.

Links with the parish, local community and global community are very good and the school hopes to improve this provision even further with the Ugandan link.

New staff have been appointed in the school and this has improved provision and through this change the Catholic ethos and unity has been maintained. This is a credit to the senior management team and governors who have managed this change skilfully.

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

- 1. Establish the use of alternative books to record the teaching of world religions to ensure consistency and avoid confusion**
- 2. Further develop role of Religious Education subject leader to include partnership with link governor and a regular reporting system to governors**

## **PUPILS**

**How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups**

### **Grade 3**

Attainment on entry is broadly average and results at the end of Year 6 are average although there are signs of recent improvement. A good tracking system shows that attainment in Religious Education is mainly satisfactory with good aspects by the end of primary education. Special needs pupils are well supported by a hard-working and competent support staff and intervention strategies are in place to enhance their education.

The majority of the children attend the Catholic High School at the end of their primary education and the school has established good links to make transition smooth. Pupils from year 6 and year 5 have the opportunity to visit the high school and staff from the high school attend the Leavers Mass for the children from St Joseph's. The Rossendale Catholic Schools cluster arranges lunchtime meetings for headteachers and clergy from local parishes to discuss developments in the Religious life of the community.

Leadership qualities are developed in older pupils through prefect roles and a recent initiative, 'seeds and gardeners' where Year 6 pupils form a partnership with the children in reception class and share good practice while welcoming them into primary education. Year 6 children are given the opportunity to

develop their leaderships qualities on a four day residential break where they improve their skills in working in teams and problem solving. The school has a pupil council that meets weekly and discusses ideas for improving school facilities and for finding ways to help people less fortunate than themselves. They have planned new play equipment for the Key Stage 2 playground and have organised fund raising events for local and international charities. The school has also been involved in raising money for many other charities including CAFOD, cornerstones and Mediquip for Kids.

Mass is celebrated in school monthly when family and parishioners are able to worship alongside the children. During October the headteacher leads children in the Rosary and the school plans special liturgical presentations during Holy Week and during Advent. There is a prayer room where children have the opportunity for private prayer and reflection and there is a 'prayer box' for pupils to add their own prayers in the school entrance display. There is a weekly celebration assembly where children are praised for good behaviour and good work. The school also has a star of the week award, attendance awards and house points. Good behaviour is constantly reinforced in a positive way and this leads to the very good behaviour and good manners of all the children. Assemblies are planned with the children and are of a high standard. During inspection, the headteacher's assembly was about giving time for other people during Lent. The children entered the hall quietly to music and the older children dramatised a story of a wealthy footballer who had no friends because she was unwilling to share her time. The children were very keen to answer questions and sang beautifully at the end of the assembly. Children in the reception/year 1 class took part in a class liturgy celebrating the good things in their lives. The room was darkened with twinkling lights around the prayer focus to create a feeling of awe and after the children had been given the opportunity to talk about the good things in their lives the teacher read the story of 'A Very Happy Day', which was about Jesus entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. This was a very special introduction to the events of Holy Week for the children.

The sacramental programme is school focused and is shared with St Joseph's school, St Peter's school and the parish communities. Opportunities are given to explore and develop the sacraments through whole school assemblies, meetings with parents in school, the monthly Mass and work with parents at home. Forgiveness is encouraged through a 'new day' approach and staff are very good role models. St Joseph's is a secure and safe environment in which children grow and develop to feel respect and care and to know the love of God. Staff have a good relationship with pupils and children feel that if they have any worries they would talk to their teacher.

## **How effective the provision is for Catholic Education**

**Grade 2**

Provision for Catholic Education at St Joseph's is generally good with some outstanding aspects. Teachers have positive relationships with the children which generates interest and respect. Behaviour is very good in all acts of

prayer and worship and children regularly give up their time to support others. There are well presented prayer focus areas in the classrooms and around the school with examples of pupils work. There is a particularly good example of this in the hall where the Stations of the Cross are surrounded by the children's very perceptive prayers and thoughts.

There are good strategies in place for monitoring Religious Education including lesson observations, planning and book scrutinies and pupil conferencing. The Religious Education subject leader ensures that tracking is updated each term and that work is assessed regularly. Recently the school has focussed on teaching and learning through an initiative by Lancashire Education Authority and the work on assessment systems and recording has been applied to Religious Education. Different styles and genres are used to inspire and interest the children in their lessons but differentiation is mainly by outcome and marking is not always consistent.

During inspection a very good lesson was observed in reception/Year 1 about the miracles of Jesus. The children assembled quietly on the carpet and began with their gathering hymn. The teacher recalled the previous lesson by asking the children about various stories about Jesus. The children responded with, 'It's a miracle!' after each story. Then a first aid box was produced and the children considered various illnesses and injuries before ending with a prayer for anyone who was sick. An excellent lesson in year 4/ 5 reflected on our choices during Lent, whether to give up something or to do something special. The planned activity at the end of the lesson was a 'chooser', when the children inserted a variety of Lenten promises and had random choices for each day during Lent.

Children are interested in learning about others religions and they respect and celebrate the unique differences. Themed weeks are planned for world religions and there are good displays around the school. The work in the children's books is good but it would be better if they recorded work on other religions in a separate book to avoid confusion. The school has strong links with other schools in the community through the Rossendale Cluster and have been fund raising to help a child in a local school. St Joseph's have established a link with a missionary priest in Uganda and have been fund raising and corresponding on a regular basis. The school now hopes to develop this link and is looking into the possibility of forming a partnership with a school in Uganda and establishing correspondence and exchanging information.

In line with national and diocesan guidelines the required time is spent on curriculum Religious Education and parents are aware of their right to withdraw pupils from Religious Education and worship although there has not been any request for withdrawal. Resources are regularly updated and are stored in the prayer room.

## **LEADERS AND MANAGERS**

### **How effective leaders and managers are in developing The Catholic life of the School**

#### **Grade 2**

St Joseph's is led by a very committed and enthusiastic headteacher and her staff and an able and supportive governing body. Leadership and management of Religious Education is good and is showing signs of further development. The chair of Governors is a regular visitor to the school and is able to witness the school's Catholic ethos and its religious, spiritual and moral focus. The link governor is new to the role but he is committed to working with the Religious Education subject leader to develop the role. He is familiar with the Religious Education documents, has observed a Religious Education lesson and is keen to become more involved with the religious life of the school. The Parish Priest is a welcome visitor in the school and works with the headteachers of St Joseph's school and St Peter's school to ensure that the sacramental programme is appropriate and welcoming for children and parents.

Headteacher reports to governors includes a section on Religious Education and the religious life of the school. Religious Education is also a prominent part of the school improvement plan and the mission statement, which is reviewed yearly, has a high profile in the life of the school. The governors are protective of the school's future and the preservation of the Catholic presence in the community. They attend Masses, assemblies and other school events to encourage the staff and pupils. Sunday Mass is celebrated in the school and the monthly Mass in school is frequented by parishioners and the refreshment served afterwards are a good opportunity for parish and community links.

Staff attend training organised by the diocese in Religious Education and are aware of the changes and the new syllabus that is being introduced. One training day each year is devoted to the development of the religious life of the school and the shared vision of the Rossendale Catholic Cluster of schools ensures the sharing of good practice and the spiritual growth of the community. Induction of new staff in the religious life of the school takes place to ensure familiarity, continuity and confidence in Religious Education. When new staff are appointed the governors will seek, where possible, to employ a committed Catholic to promote the shared vision in the school.

The school is in the process of forming a Parents' Council to encourage parents to support their children's education. A recent roadshow was well attended where there were different stands for curriculum areas including Religious Education. The school uses text messages to inform parents of forthcoming events such as Masses and assemblies and the school website provides up to date information on what is happening in the school. The pupils have their own passwords and a section on the website where they can download activities and information to enhance their learning.

