



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## INSPECTION REPORT

### ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL HEDNESFORD, STAFFORDSHIRE

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Inspection dates 24<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> May 2012  
Reporting Inspector Mr Dominic Collins

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr Michael O'Sullivan
School address	Hill Top Hednesford Cannock Staffs WS12 1DE
Telephone number	01543 512230
E-mail address	office@st-josephs-hednesford.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2007
DFE School number	860/3461
Unique Reference Number	124354

**Headteacher** Mrs Karen Bennett

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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



## Evidence

The inspection was carried out by 1 Diocesan Inspector. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of religious education (RE) and Catholic life. To validate the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspector observed 2 full RE lessons one with the headteacher. In addition the inspector completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. He held meetings with the chair and vice chair of governors, staff, parish priest and parents. He observed a whole school assembly, a prayer service and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school, and pupils' behaviour. He looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the RE development plan, teachers' planning, learning journals and minutes of related meetings. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about assessment which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

## Information about the school

St Joseph's is an average size Catholic primary school serving the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes, Hednesford, Staffordshire, which is a mixed residential area. The large majority of pupils are of white British heritage, with a small percentage from ethnic minority backgrounds. There are currently 220 pupils on roll of whom 61% are baptised Catholics. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The school is currently undergoing extensive building work and refurbishment following a successful bid for diocesan funding. The school holds a number of awards notably the intermediate level International Schools Award.

## Main Finding

In its self evaluation St Joseph's judges itself to be a good Catholic school. This judgement is brought about by the evaluation of its Catholic life and RE provision by the school leadership, through the application of an annual cycle of monitoring processes that are effectively implemented, outcomes evaluated and used to inform future planning. There is clear evidence that this has had a positive impact on the continuing development of these areas. The school's judgements are reliable and justified. Staff and pupils embrace Gospel values through a shared understanding and practice of the school's Catholic mission which is central to its daily life. St Joseph's has a strong Catholic identity and is well supported by the governing body who are fully involved in the ongoing evaluation of its Catholic life and religious education.

## School self evaluation

The school has developed effective processes that ensure that the self evaluation of its Catholic life and religious education clearly identifies areas in need of review or refreshment. Catholic life is closely monitored by the school leadership and the RE co-ordinator. Outcomes of audits of spiritual life and prayer are evaluated by the school leadership and feature prominently in the school RE action plan, progress of which is discussed and monitored by the school governors. As pupils are involved in developing the school mission they are also able to contribute to areas for improvement. The established systems include the monitoring of teaching and learning in RE through lesson observations, assessments of pupils' work, learning walks, questionnaires, and audits of spiritual life and prayer. The strength of the school self evaluation is that outcomes are

used to inform the current RE development plan that in turn focuses priorities in order to improve pupil attainment and progress in their faith journey, as maturing Christians.

The quality of RE lessons is monitored annually and lesson observations, carried out by the RE co-ordinator and headteacher, inform the leadership team of the quality of teaching and learning in RE. Feedback is given to staff and areas for development are followed up, either individually or within a collective forum. The accuracy of school judgements made of teaching and learning is supported by lessons observed during the inspection. Evidence of pupils work in RE across the school shows a consistency of good quality outcomes overall, commensurate to the effective teaching they receive. Pupils also demonstrate a good level of subject knowledge and their oral recall, particularly at the end of KS2, is impressive. The school evaluation that the effective teaching of RE has a positive impact on pupil progress and attainment is fully justified.

An effective tracking system serves to monitor pupil progress in RE and identify learning needs; this process follows the same pattern as for other core subjects. Additional support is given to individuals and groups of children where appropriate. End of unit assessments are collated by the RE subject leader and outcomes of this analysis are shared with governors through a dedicated curriculum, standards and ethos sub committee. The school has identified the need to review and develop moderation meetings for the levelling of pupils' work.

The RE curriculum is closely monitored and opportunities are constantly being sought to enrich and develop it further. The parish priest, who is also the link governor for RE, is a frequent visitor to the school and works closely with the staff to assist in the delivery of aspects of the diocesan RE programme across the school. Sacramental preparation for the children is thorough and parents are fully involved through a programme of school and parish meetings.

In view of the quality of school self evaluation and the areas for development that have been identified, the capacity for improvement in both Catholic life and religious education is good. Leadership by the headteacher and senior team is effective and they communicate a clear vision to a dedicated staff team. The school is very well supported by the governors who are fully involved in the school's evaluation of its Catholic life and RE. The parish priest has formed an effective liaison with the school, especially as a key partner in planning sacramental preparation and the continuing development of its Catholic life.

### **Overall effectiveness of the school<sup>1</sup>**

Outcomes for pupils in RE are good. There is evidence to show that the majority of pupils achieve within or above the expected levels of attainment across each key stage. On entry into school, pupils receive a very positive start to their faith journey. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons, they have developed good habits of work and demonstrate a positive attitude to their learning.

Relationships at all levels throughout the school are excellent and the pastoral care of pupils is given high priority by all members of staff, who promote a strong sense of spiritual purpose. The children clearly enjoy coming to school and there is a common sense of belonging and understanding of the school mission. They are able to discuss the teachings of Jesus with a growing level of confidence and try hard to live these out in their daily lives, by their behaviour, positive attitudes and the way they express their

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<sup>1</sup> As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform to those of the school.

Catholic identity. A variety of opportunities within the school setting, for example, school council, 'special friends', between Year 6 and reception, allow pupils to develop their understanding of care and responsibility for others. Pupils are given opportunities to openly discuss and reflect on their school life and relationships during PSHE/SEAL sessions.

The school makes good provision for collective worship. Children are reverent and at ease when praying together and understand the importance it has in our daily lives. In an excellent school assembly Year 2 children gave a clear message on the theme of Pentecost that was well planned and beautifully executed. The children responded enthusiastically through their joyful singing and prayers, brought to life by sign actions and readily engaged the parents, parishioners and governors who were present. The school engages the services of a chaplain, in collaboration with Cardinal Griffin Catholic High School, who works closely with the cluster of Catholic feeder schools, supporting staff and pupils in the preparation of the liturgy and the provision of additional sacramental and classroom support. This valuable additional input is highly effective.

Interesting and informative religious areas and displays of children's work are evident all around the school. Classroom environments are made bright and attractive, in spite of building alterations, each with a prominent prayer focus, creating an atmosphere for praying and learning together. Through self evaluation the school aims to offer more opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship within school, parish and home.

Provision is good overall with some outstanding features, including aspects of teaching, that result in good outcomes for pupils and some high attainment. The RE curriculum, based upon diocesan guidelines is well matched and adapted to meet the needs of all learners. Marking by staff is encouraging, thoughtful and generally pupils receive good quality feedback about their progress and receive guidance of how to improve further. Practical assessment systems are in place and data is analysed and used to inform planning. In order to further enrich the curriculum, pupils' awareness of other world religions, needs to be broadened and through self evaluation, the school acknowledges that this is an area for further development.

St Joseph's is a good Catholic school in which all pupils develop in their faith journey as happy, confident learners. Parents and carers speak highly about the positive impact its Catholic life has and the education their children receive.

### **Recommendations**

- Develop pupils' appreciation of different cultures and faiths
- Assist pupils' in understanding their role as Catholic Christians in the life of the parish
- Develop and extend opportunities for prayer both within school and the home.
- Develop and plan opportunities for pupils to lead worship from the planning phase to delivery



Diocesan Education Service,  
Don Bosco House,  
Coventry Road,  
Coleshill.  
B46 3EA

June 2012

Dear Parents and Carers

**Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School, May 2012**

I am writing this letter to share with you the findings of the diocesan inspection of your children's school. Diocesan inspection now explores in detail the school's own view of itself as expressed in its self-evaluation. For this reason, much of the report is more technical than used to be the case. You are still entitled to have a copy of the full report should you want one and it will be available on the school website or by request from the school office.

St Joseph's School provides a good Catholic education where pupils can develop as happy, confident learners in a secure and caring environment. The Catholic mission of the school underpins all aspects of its daily life and the evidence of their attitudes, values and spiritual development is demonstrated by the way the children embrace it. The children are fine ambassadors, are courteous and friendly and clearly take pride in their school. Pupils make good progress in their Religious Education due to the good teaching, support and encouragement they receive from the headteacher and her staff. The school is very well supported by an effective and committed governing body and parish priest.

In order to broaden learning in RE, I have recommended that the school:-

- increase opportunities to develop children's appreciation of other faiths
- involve the children more in planning and leading collective worship
- enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of their role as maturing Christians in the life of the parish.

It was a pleasure to inspect St Joseph's School. I enjoyed my visit very much and was made most welcome by all. Your children are a credit to the school, their families and those who care for them.

Yours sincerely

Dominic Collins  
Diocesan Inspector