



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

School: St Joseph's RC Primary School  
Address: Wellington Road, Todmorden OL14 5HP  
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e-mail address: head@st-josephs-tod.calderdale.sch.uk  
URN: 107560

Headteacher: Mrs M Cooper  
Chair of Governors: Mrs Fiona Monaghan

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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

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Date of inspection: May 2011  
Date of previous inspection: January 2008  
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's, Todmorden. The school serves a large catchment area and children are drawn from very contrasting socio-economic backgrounds including hilltop farms, converted properties, terraced housing and council accommodation. The school is much smaller than the national average with 113 children from 3-11 years. 77% of the children from reception class to year 6 are baptised Catholics. 18% of the children have English as an additional language and 33% of children are entitled to free school meals. There are 21 children on the special needs register which is above the national average and 3 children have statements of special educational need. On entry to the school about 50% of the children's attainment is broadly in line with the national average, 40% is below and 10% is well below.

There are 5 teachers including the headteacher and all are Catholic. One teacher has the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. One teacher is on the diocesan course and another teacher has been on the course but not yet completed. There are 11 teaching assistants.

## **Overall Effectiveness**

**Grade 3**

St Joseph's is a school where pupils feel safe and cared for and parents are welcomed. The behaviour around the school and in classrooms is good and the children are keen to learn. Staff are very good role models and form good relationships with pupils and parents. The school is a happy place and the standard and variety of displays complements the cheerful surroundings.

The prayer life of the school is a strength and children are given many opportunities to attend Mass and to take part in liturgies and assemblies and to learn reflective and private prayer. Religious education is well monitored and evaluated by the Religious Education coordinator and standards are continually reviewed and developed.

Good practice is shared with other schools in the local schools and Catholic networks and staff take part in training to develop their skills in teaching Religious Education. Pupil's Religious Education assessment books are used to track progress and to ensure continuity and progression.

## **Capacity for sustained improvement**

**Grade 2**

The headteacher and staff are committed to the continuous development of the faith life of the school. The mission statement has been reviewed involving staff, governors, parents through questionnaires and the pupil council. The Religious Education coordinator and the headteacher and staff have reviewed policies and practice within the school and are planning for the new syllabus which will begin in September. The role of Religious Education coordinator is

being developed with another member of staff who, with relevant training and support, will take responsibility for Religious Education.

Strategies are in place for monitoring of teaching and learning and book scrutinies and classroom observations take place. The Religious Education coordinator works with the appointed governor and the role is to develop with regular reports which will be relayed to the governing body.

Links with the parish and local community includes the development of Parish Pals a group of parishioners who work with the school to encourage children to participate in parish activities. Members of the governing body are also catechists for the sacramental programme. Global links include a partnership with Poland which helps in welcoming the growing number of Polish children in the school. There is also a Polish choir, 'Barka', who sing regularly in the community and in concerts.

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

1. Develop more challenging activities for higher achieving pupils and ensure marking is consistent and relevant to pupils development.
2. Continue to develop links with the parish community
3. Ensure regular Religious Education written reports are shared with the link governor

## **PUPILS**

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

**Grade 2**

Attainment on entry is slightly below national expectation but pupils achieve well and leave primary education with at least average results in Religious Education. Pupil assessment books track the children through the school and with regular levelling ensure continuity and progression. Special Needs pupils are well supported by a team of hard working and committed teaching assistants and intervention strategies are used to enhance their provision. Bilingual support is available for children who do not speak English at home.

Prayer and worship is good and is a strength of the school. There are thought provoking displays and prayer areas around the school and in classrooms which are appropriate to the age and understanding of the children. A low level prayer table in early years gives the children the opportunity to touch the religious objects on display. Children have many opportunities to pray and meditate, regular Masses, liturgies and assemblies take place and children have the opportunity to help with the preparation and presentation. Parents have an open invitation to assemblies and other school religious activities and

regularly attend. Parents are aware of their right to withdraw children from the Religious Education and collective worship of the school but they are happy for their children to take part.

Collective worship in classrooms is good and the children are attentive and respectful. A very good liturgy service with Class 4 considered the time after the Resurrection and children's interpretations of witness reports from those who saw Jesus were read. The children laid symbols on the prayer area to remind us of the story. An excellent reflection on the painting of St John of the Cross by Salvador Dali was presented by the teacher and then candles were taken to other classes to proclaim, 'He is Risen.' The children finished the service by considering how they could bear witness to Jesus. Children in Class 2 came into the hall quietly for collective worship and sat in a circle around a prayer display of Our Lady. They dramatised the story of Our Lady and Jesus as a boy and responded to the story with 'Mary loved him'. The story was interspersed with children singing the chorus, 'Ave Maria.' Children read short bidding prayers, presented coloured hearts, 'full of love,' to be displayed around the picture of Our Lady and then sang, 'As I Kneel before You.' Each child coloured a picture of Our Lady to take home and to remind them of their special prayer time.

A whole school assembly was led by the headteacher and began with a welcome hymn sung in Polish and English by the Barka choir. A display relating to the Angelus was discussed and then the children were reminded of how Mary said 'Yes,' to God. The children prayed together and special children's prayers were read out from their Easter display. The assembly finished with the children singing 'You Have Called us by our Name'. Friday achievement assemblies include awards for good work and behaviour and there are lunchtime awards determined by the welfare staff, for being helpful and kind .

The school has high expectations of good behaviour and respect and base their philosophy upon gospel values of forgiveness and reconciliation. Children are encouraged to consider the effect of their actions on people around them. Racial incidents are rare and the very few incidents of name calling and unkindness are dealt with swiftly. Children are secure in the knowledge that if they have a problem they can speak to a member of staff and their concerns will be dealt with appropriately. Older children act as 'buddies,' and help with friendship groups in the playground. The pupil council meets to discuss the requests of their peers and this has included a 'buddy bench,' and the prospect of a snack shop selling healthy food items. They have also helped with fund-raising which has included money for Overgate Hospice, CAFOD and the Salford Diocesan Caritas group who are instrumental in helping many causes including disadvantaged children.

The majority of the children go to Blessed Trinity Roman Catholic College at the end of their primary school years and staff at St Joseph's have established good links to aid transition. Activities have included joint Masses, retreats and work with high achieving pupils. Teachers from the high school have also worked with different classes at St Joseph's School.

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

**Grade 3**

Provision for Catholic education is generally satisfactory with some good aspects. The work in the children's books shows different styles and genres and is generally well presented although pupil's need to respond to development points made by their teachers when their work is marked. Teacher planning is recorded on the shared server in school and teachers also access information on the internet including diocesan and other religious education sites. Children can use the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) from home to extend and consolidate aspects of their learning. Religious Education is moderated and levelled and future planning is developed from this information. Teachers subject knowledge is good and they are able to respond to questions asked by the children with confidence and clarity. 10% of the curriculum time is allocated to Religious Education as is required by national and diocesan guidelines and the school is using the REvision 2000 syllabus until the next academic year when they will begin to use The Way, The Truth and the Life. Some of the teachers have taken part in training for the new syllabus and this will be passed on to other staff during the summer term.

Lessons observed during inspection were good. In early years the children recalled the Easter story with the help of pictures on the whiteboard and the story was told competently by their teacher. They considered the emotions of Jesus' friends when they heard He was still alive. They decided that they could show their love for Jesus by the way they behaved to one another. They were left to wonder about the next part of the story which their teacher told them they would hear about after the holidays. A good lesson in Class 3 on developing our talents began with children discussing how God gave us the gift of five senses with prompts including a dish of strawberries, a recording of birdsong and bowl of sand. The children were given well differentiated and supported activities considering their own talents and how they could use them to help others.

During inspection children were able to talk with confidence about their Catholic faith and related the Easter story clearly and with good chronology. Older children who had taken part in the sacramental programme were able to talk about receiving the sacraments and used the appropriate liturgical language. The sacramental programme is organised in the parish with the help of two school governors who are also catechists. Religious Education is well resourced with a selection of books in the school library and a central area for artefacts and display items. Prayer areas and displays in classrooms are well presented and are used when the children take part in collective worship and prayer liturgies. Children's work in Religious Education is evident in classrooms and on other displays around the school.

World Religions is taught in Key Stage 2 through topic and planned theme weeks. Children visit other places of worship and visitors are brought into the school to broaden their knowledge. Recently, a Rabbi came in to school to talk about the Jewish faith and the children took part in a Passover meal arranged

through the parish. Work is recorded as part of displays and in presentations and assemblies which promote positive attitudes. The children are given the opportunity to understand other religions and cultures and to compare similarities with the Catholic faith. The school also has global links with Spain and Poland and the Polish link in particular has been important in the integration of the children from Polish heritage in the school. The Barka choir is also a good community link and the children are requested to perform on many occasions.

## **LEADERS AND MANAGERS**

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

**Grade 3**

St Joseph's school is led by a very committed headteacher and her staff and a supportive governing body. The mission statement is regularly reviewed with input from staff, governors, parents through questionnaires and children's comments through the pupil council. New parents are given a copy of the mission statement when their child starts at the school. Governors are aware of the strengths and areas for future development in the school and are keen to develop their role and partnership. The new parish priest wants to continue to develop work with the school to ensure children are well prepared for their faith journey and for an active role in the parish community.

Communication with parents is good and parents are welcome to come into school to discuss children's problems with the staff. Weekly newsletters inform parents of forthcoming events in school and the use of the electronic noticeboard in the main entrance, the school website and text messaging ensures that parents are up to date. The Wednesday Word is sent home every week to give parents the opportunity to discuss the gospel and readings of the following Sunday with their children. There are Parent consultations and open days twice a year when parents have the chance to look at their children's work and discuss their progress with their teacher. Good links have been established with family support agencies and this helps to support vulnerable and hard to reach families. Every Wednesday morning a thriving and very popular parent and toddler group meets in school and this provides another link with parents of children already in the school and with prospective parents.

Religious Education forms an integral part of the School Improvement Plan and is identified under both curriculum and church and community. The Religious Education coordinator formulates an action plan which becomes part of the School Improvement Plan and there is a good three year focus for establishing, continuing and promoting different aspects of Catholic life in the community. Performance management promotes the aims of the school and one teacher has a specific religious education objective. The school is considering introducing Religious Education objectives for all the staff in the future. The school is totally committed to raising standards in all areas including Religious Education and planning and book scrutinies carried out by

the senior leadership team indicates good progress overall. Better use of classroom observations and learning walks will help to focus future developments in Religious Education. Governors are committed to supporting the school and regularly review sections of the School Evaluation Form. They now plan to include a review of the Section 48 Religious Education evaluation form to keep them better informed of progress and new developments. The Religious Education governor is keen to strengthen the links with the school and will be receiving regular updates on monitoring and changes in the curriculum.