



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL STOURBRIDGE

Inspection dates 25th - 26th November 2013
Reporting Inspector Mr Joseph Skivington

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mrs Charlotte Colesby
School address	Leavale Road Norton Stourbridge DY8 2DT
Telephone number	01384 818325
E-mail address	data@st-jo-st.dudley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	November 2008
DFE School number	332/3355
Unique Reference Number	103849

Headteacher Mrs Norah Painter

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 5 RE lessons. 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 met with the governors. He observed school assembly, whole school meditation, reception meditation, 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 development plan and teachers' planning. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about subject leadership, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

St Joseph's is a one form entry Catholic primary school situated in the Norton area of Stourbridge in the parish of Our Lady and All Saints. There are 205 pupils on roll, of whom 96% are Catholic. Pupils come from a mix of socio-economic backgrounds, with a low baseline in previous religious knowledge. The majority of teachers are Catholic, and there are strong links with the parish.

Main Finding

St Joseph's school in its self evaluation documents judges itself to be an outstanding Catholic school. The evidence gathered over the two day inspection securely validates this judgement. It is a welcoming, inclusive, and distinctly Catholic school. All pupils, regardless of background, benefit significantly from, and contribute to, every area of school life, and consequently to its strong Catholic ethos. Their response to the excellent provision for collective worship is outstanding. The provision and outcomes from the religious education programme, both teaching and learning, are also outstanding. The support and challenge from the governors, including the link governor for RE, is very effective. The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior team are outstanding. They know the school well and have clear, measurable goals and objectives, which have their origin in robust, accurate and reliable procedures for monitoring provision and outcomes.

School self evaluation

The leadership of the school uses effective self evaluation procedures through frequent reviews and reflection on its current practice and is using a comprehensive audit, which results in achievable aims and measurable objectives incorporated into the school development plan. It can demonstrate examples of its effectiveness, in planning and implementing development of Catholic ethos; for instance, the constant focus on the school's mission, the encouragement of staff prayer and the quality of the pupils' Wednesday Word. The senior leadership recognises the importance of encouraging frequent feedback and reflection on the school's mission, and is planning actively to bring governors and parents more fully into the process. The governors are very knowledgeable about the school because of their commitment and hands on approach as critical friends and support. The link governor for RE, who is also the parish priest, makes an invaluable contribution through his presence, his wide knowledge and experience, and his inspiring rapport with pupils, staff and parents.

The teaching and learning of RE is monitored regularly through subject review, lesson observations, and book trawls. These are programmed and carried out with discernible

impact on improved performance and outcomes throughout the school. The emphasis on learning from religion is evident in pupils' written work where they are developing a sound grasp of what it means in their daily lives, but also evident in their exemplary behaviour and caring attitude towards each other. The curriculum is balanced and accessible to all pupils. It effectively provides pupils with a growing insight into the life and message of Jesus as well as the central beliefs that Catholics hold, and the link between belief and action. Pupils are given many opportunities to exercise their generosity and they do organise much charity work in the local community and beyond. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of other major religions is sound

The present subject leader of RE is relatively new and working towards the continuing development of assessment and tracking of pupils' progress. Planning is revised constantly and data on pupils' progress is collected, although as yet not clearly couched using the diocesan level descriptors. There are regular written reviews and summaries of the impact of provision presented to the governors every year, and an RE action plan is subsequently drawn up. The present plan has laudable aims, which would, however, benefit from more detailed and measurable objectives.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes for pupils in RE are outstanding, the result of consistently good and often outstanding teaching. Pupils' base assessment scores in RE indicate prior knowledge and religious experience to be low. Pupils make rapid progress in the Foundation classes and by the end of Key Stage 1 are meeting or exceeding expected attainment levels. This excellent progress continues through Key Stage 2 so that by the end of Year 6 the large majority of pupils are meeting or exceeding their age related expectations. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress, supported by able learning assistants and well pitched, differentiated tasks. Older pupils are able to speak with confidence about their learning in RE and have a sound grasp of the main tenets of the Faith and the significance and efficacy of prayer. They enjoy those lessons where they are engaged in their own learning. There is evidence that the encouragement of independent, peer and group learning is developing enthusiastic and motivated learners. They say they enjoy RE lessons and appreciate that they have some opportunity to feedback to their teachers on how best they learn in lessons. Their very positive behaviour in lessons and around the school contributes much to their learning.

The pupils, through their time at St Joseph's absorb and internalise the attitudes and values inspired by the message of Jesus. They well understand the connection between these and how they should act towards others and behave in their own lives. They are quick to praise, to thank and to forgive. Every pupil regardless of faith, or none, feels a valued member of the school community, and participates reverently in prayer and liturgy. All pupils are familiar with the mission statement and benefit from the opportunity to explore further their role in it. For example, Year 5 pupils have produced beautiful, reflective work in their books developing their ideas of what the school's mission and purpose means to them. They make a positive contribution to the Catholic life of the school through good quality feedback on their learning and their ideas about collective worship, through questionnaires, pupil voice and the school council. The chaplain speaks to the Year 6 pupils every year in an exit survey to encourage them to express their ideas on how Catholic life and collective worship can be improved. Older pupils mentor and mediate each other and the younger pupils.

¹ 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.

Pupils' response to prayer invitations and the rich provision is outstanding, with an enthusiastic participation in liturgies and assemblies and opportunities for prayer. They are taking more ownership of the planning and presentation of liturgies and assemblies their own class assemblies – a result of the aforementioned exit survey where pupils expressed their wish to be more involved in the prayer life of the school, as well as being willing servers, readers and singers at the Masses in the parish church. The parish appreciates the involvement of the children at these Masses. Prayer is undoubtedly an important part of their daily lives. They pray well, even the youngest, and their own prayers reflect their growing maturity and understanding. They sing with enthusiasm and feeling. Their response demonstrates their deepening spirituality and the school's vibrant life of prayer and worship, as in the stillness and focus of whole school meditations. Pupils recite the Angelus daily.

Provision for RE is outstanding. The best teaching involves the pupils fully in their own learning and encourages independent and peer work. They do the work, while the teacher skilfully steers and shapes their learning through questioning that probes for understanding. Teachers are aware that their subject knowledge needs to be constantly deepened through supportive training and Inset in order to allow pupils, especially the more able, to achieve their full potential. Teaching assistants working with individual pupils provide fruitful feedback to the teacher so that individual learning needs can be better met. Lesson planning is very effective when it takes account of prior learning particularly in the case of setting lesson objectives, which target the learning needs and abilities of individual pupils. The best questioning has challenge and higher expectations, as well as probing and checking continually for understanding. The quality and helpfulness of the marking of written work is effective but is work in progress. Assessment procedures provide for the close tracking of individual progress, and this informs teaching and lesson objectives successfully. The use of the RE level indicators is not yet the norm but the school recognises this and plans to address and develop them.

The curriculum is broad, balanced, closely linked to the Diocesan Strategy, and accessible to all. The relationships programme is in line with Catholic guidelines. Pupils can speak with some understanding of similarities and differences between religions, thanks to a very successful multi-faith week, when pupils explore different world religions in some depth. School and parish work closely together to run the well planned and fruitful sacramental preparation programmes which provide an evident impetus within the RE curriculum. Their experiences are further enhanced and enriched with visits and visiting speakers

The quality of the provision for collective worship is outstanding. Well constructed liturgies follow the Church's liturgical year, and are echoed by some excellent displays in classrooms and around the school, and there are traditional Catholic practices such as the Rosary in October and Stations of the Cross in Lent. The curriculum makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Mass is celebrated regularly with pupils taking an active role with great enthusiasm. IT is used effectively both in lessons and assemblies to colour and flesh out the topics and themes. Links with the parish and involvement in parish life are a real strength.

Recommendations

- * Develop further the quality and impact of assessment, and the use of data, by making use of the National RE level indicators to capture more fully a picture of individual pupils' achievement and progress over time.