



St Joseph's Catholic Infant School

Mitchell Street, Birtley, Chester le Street, DH3 1LU

School Unique Reference Number: **108389**

Inspection dates:	29 – 30 March 2017
Lead inspector:	Denise Kendall

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 Infant School is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- St Joseph's is a welcoming and nurturing school where a strong sense of family is clearly evident. The Catholic character and ethos are at the centre of the school and strongly reflect the school's commitment to Gospel values rooted in the community.
- Religious Education is at the heart of the school community. The pupils are involved in interesting activities which motivate and engage them and ensure that they enjoy their lessons and make good progress.
- Prayer is at the heart of the school community and has a significant impact on pupils, parents and all those who take part because of the range and variety of prayer opportunities that are available.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Joseph's infant school is a smaller than average school with just three classes covering the final year of the foundation stage and key stage one.
- Most pupils are white British origin with a small percentage from other ethnic groups.
- The majority of pupils enter school below age related expectations.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average.
- The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is average.
- The number of pupils who join the school during the school year has been higher than average.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Continue to raise standards in Religious Education by:
 - Ensuring that effective marking is consistent within key stage one and that it is more clearly focused on pupil progress and achievement in Religious Education.
 - Ensuring marking clearly identifies for pupils the next steps in their learning and how this will help them to improve.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

1

- 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.

1

1

1

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- Pupils are proud of their school and follow the mission statement. They clearly understand what is special about their Catholic school. They speak enthusiastically about being a pupil at St Joseph's saying, 'everyone wants to help you here, we follow the light of Jesus'.
- Relationships throughout the school are excellent. This is demonstrated in the way pupils support one another both in the classroom and the playground showing respect and care. They obviously respond to and benefit from the caring and nurturing environment found in the school. The well-established buddy system together with the family group work clearly contributes to this work.
- Pupils contribute to developing the Catholic character of the school through the fundraising they do for a wide range of charities. Despite being so young the children are fully involved in this. For example the Tini Mini Vinnies were recently involved in fundraising and were proud to give the local St Vincent de Paul Society money they had raised to support life in Sudan. They were fully aware that this money would provide food for a baby for one year.
- Pupils fully engage in liturgical events. This is evident from the way in which they talk about how they have celebrated different feasts and events such as the feast of St Joseph and harvest thanksgiving. They were also proud to show their special book about the Year of Mercy and to talk about taking home the Lenten bags and the Travelling Crib.
- The behaviour of the pupils is excellent. They want to do their best at all times and clearly show that they understand the importance of being kind and caring to one another.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- As soon as you enter St Joseph's infant school it is evident that the Catholic character and ethos are at the centre of the school and strongly reflect the school's commitment to Gospel values rooted in the community. Displays in the central corridor and classrooms reflect the school's mission, ensuring a spiritual and stimulating environment.
- A strong sense of family is evident within the school. Parents, governors and parishioners contribute significantly to the Catholic Life of the school through their participation in Collective Worship, liturgy and the celebration of Mass.
- The headteacher leads by example demonstrating a strong sense of purpose and commitment to the Catholic ethos and mission of the school. She ensures that all staff are

able to share in this. They are encouraged and given opportunities to develop their own faith by participating in morning prayers, liturgies and the celebration of Mass.

- Many opportunities for spiritual development are planned for staff and governors such as the Advent reflection led by the deacon who is a regular visitor and great supporter of the school.
- The school provides the highest levels of pastoral support to pupils and their families – particularly those who are in most need. Parents speak highly of the difference this has made to their own individual families and to their children. Parents are appreciative of the caring and respectful relationships that exist between staff, parents and pupils. They say this is a happy and inclusive school.

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

- The headteacher supported by the staff and governors gives powerful witness to the school's ethos and Catholic character. High expectations and a shared vision are clearly visible in both word and action in all aspects of school life. Together they have strong aspirations for the future development of the school.
- All staff are included in the life of the school; demonstrated by both classroom staff and ancillary staff coming together for staff prayer at the beginning of the day. They are enthusiastic and motivated by being part of the shared vision and living out the mission of the church in their daily work.
- Excellent systems are in place for monitoring and analysing the Catholic Life of the school, including the use of questionnaires and discussions with pupils. Governors monitor the Catholic Life of the school both formally and informally during their frequent visits and attendance at school and parish activities. As a result they are able to speak highly of various aspects of Catholic Life and the impact this has on both pupils and parents.
- Governors make a significant and highly valued contribution to the Catholic Life of the school. They are fully informed of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are actively involved in the school's self-evaluation and the development of the plan for improvement and offer both challenge and support as appropriate.
- Parents are fully supportive of the school and value the impact that the Catholic Life of the school has on their own children. This is evident from their involvement in the spiritual and liturgical life of the school, the outstanding support given to school activities and the overwhelming support outlined in parental questionnaires and discussions.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

- 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.

1
1
1

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

- Pupils show great reverence and respect during Collective Worship. They join in prayer and worship enthusiastically, singing joyfully and with actions when appropriate. This contributes significantly to the spiritual atmosphere which is experienced by all those gathered together in prayer.
- Although the children are quite young they are able to talk about how they have been involved in preparing and leading prayer in school and the part they take in Collective Worship. They are enthusiastic about their class prayer books which they use both at school and home.
- Pupils have a good understanding of religious seasons and festivals and of the church's liturgical year. They speak proudly of how they have prepared to celebrate a range of feast days and festivals including most recently the feast of St Joseph. They know and understand the purpose of these celebrations.
- A variety of prayer opportunities are available for the pupils. An example of this is that they gained much from their experience of developing liturgical dance through working with the Mini Vinnies from one of the other parish schools. Despite being so young the pupils are growing in confidence and are enthusiastic about this form of prayer.
- Pupils enjoy collaborating with and sharing prayer with pupils from the other parish schools particularly in the parish church. They spoke proudly of their involvement in the Jesse Tree liturgy during Advent and it is obvious that they gained much from this experience. As a result of the different opportunities and experiences available for the pupils, prayer and Collective Worship contribute significantly to their spiritual and moral development.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Collective Worship is at the heart of the school community and has a significant impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils. A range and variety of prayer opportunities are provided thus ensuring that prayer is an important part in the life of the whole school community.
- The parish deacon is a regular visitor to the school and he plays an important role in leading many aspects of worship. This has a significant impact on the provision of worship within the school community.

- Collective Worship is extremely well planned and is very well resourced. Themes are rooted in Gospel values drawn from a number of topics and ideas including Bible stories, 'Statements to Live By', the liturgical year and special feast days.
- Focal points are evident in classrooms and other areas of the school, thus demonstrating the importance of prayer and worship in school life. These provide good support and stimulus for reflection and as a result contribute to the quality of prayer and worship.
- The staff clearly know and understand the importance of the liturgical year and ensure that there are many opportunities for pupils to share in this. An example of this is the way in which the liturgical calendar is displayed in the main hall together with appropriate liturgical colours. This is used during Collective Worship to support the preparation for prayer by both the pupils and their parents. As a result pupils respond well to all that is provided for them.

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

- The headteacher, Religious Education coordinator and governors have a clear understanding and vision of the importance and impact of prayer on the whole school community. As a result parents value this and speak highly of how the prayer life of the school has had an impact on bringing prayer into the home.
- As a result of focused continuing professional development, enriching experiences, outstanding resources and the priority it is given; all staff model best practice when leading and supporting pupils in Collective Worship. This ensures that it has a positive impact on both the pupils and their parents.
- Parents are invited to contribute to the prayer life of school through their contributions to prayer during liturgies led by the children.
- There is a strong commitment to sharing prayer and worship with the parish community. Special events are made known through the parish newsletter and these are well attended by parishioners as well as parents, grandparents and governors.
- Due to the young age of pupils attending the school, good transition arrangements to the junior school have been put in place supported by the parish deacon to encourage ongoing family involvement particularly for sacramental preparation.
- Very good strategies are in place to monitor Collective Worship including parental questionnaires and governor monitoring. These responses are highly valued and acted upon appropriately. An example of this is the development of an outdoor prayer space and as a result Collective Worship is outstanding.

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 promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

1

1

1

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

- Religious Education is at the heart of the school curriculum and the children's learning. All pupils appear to enjoy their Religious Education lessons. They always have a positive attitude and are enthusiastic in their response to questions. The behaviour during Religious Education lessons is excellent.
- The pupils are proud of their work in Religious Education and speak confidently about what they have learnt. They work independently within a range of different activities according to ability.
- Almost all pupils are making progress in Religious Education within lessons and over time. There is no significant difference in learning and progress between different groups of pupils. They are all developing very well with their knowledge and understanding.
- Overall outcomes are very good. Pupils enter school with knowledge and skills which are well below age expectations. School's data and evidence in books show that pupils make good progress over time through the early years and key stage one.
- Data indicates that attainment is in line with the Diocesan average over time taking into account the confidence level. Current data also indicates that pupils continue to make progress and as attainment increases data indicates that this may be above the Diocesan average this year. Work in books supports this judgement.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.

- Teaching and assessment is consistently good with many outstanding features evident in lessons. Teachers plan interesting activities which captivate the interest of pupils and ensure they are fully engaged and motivated.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge which is used well to support pupils learning. There is evidence of high expectations in all classes. Prior learning is used well to support pupils. An example of this is in year two where pupils have time at the start of each lesson to reflect on their prior learning and respond to any additional questions asked by the teacher in response to their work.
- Targeted questioning is used well to assess understanding, monitor progress and reinforce the learning objective. As a result pupils are motivated and engaged and demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning.

- Work in Religious Education is always marked. Teachers often ask pupils additional questions such as why is something important. However written feedback does not always respond to the learning objective or give guidance to pupils about how to move on in the next steps of their learning.
- There is good evidence of a range of differentiated work and activities to meet the learning objective as well as the needs and abilities of all pupils. For example in a year one lesson where the children were learning that Jesus died on Good Friday one group of pupils discussed the story and some of the words and phrases used such as 'Jesus remember me and Father forgive them'. They then wrote these words on a cross which they would place in an Easter garden.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding.

- Religious Education is given a high priority by school leaders and governors. It is evident that this is highly regarded as a core subject within the school. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. This has resulted in well targeted action plans which have led to good improvements over time. Excellent resources are available which meet the needs and abilities of the young pupils.
- Professional development is important and this is given high priority in many ways. Not only do staff attend diocesan courses, they share good practice within the school community and also with the other parish schools and the local cluster of Catholic schools. As a result standards continue to rise and a variety of rich curriculum opportunities are developed.
- The school works closely with a range of agencies within the local community, including other schools and the local parish thus enriching the opportunities available to pupils. These have included joint liturgical celebrations held within the parish church such as the annual Jesse Tree celebration in Advent.
- Governors have an excellent knowledge of the school. They regard it highly as they know it is deeply rooted in both the parish and local communities. They have been instrumental in making decisions which have enabled the school to improve and have been pro-active in bringing decisions to fruition. An example of this is the development of the outdoor spiritual prayer space. Governors monitor the strengths of the school consistently and support the headteacher through regular visits, participation in school and their active involvement in governing body meetings. They discharge their canonical and statutory duties to a high standard.

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.

1

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

1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

1

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

1

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

1

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

1

SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Joseph's Catholic Infant School
Unique reference number	108389
Local authority	Gateshead
This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Séamus Cunningham the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese under canon 806 of Canon Law. For voluntary aided schools it also fulfils the responsibility the Governing Body has to inspect the school under s48 of the Education Act 2005.	
Chair of governors	Mrs M Irwin
Head teacher	Mrs V Gibson
Date of previous school inspection	March 2012
Telephone number	0191 4102324
Email address	birtleystjosephscatholicinfantschool@gateshead.gov.uk