

Archdiocese of Cardiff



Inspection Report

St Joseph's RC High School

Inspection dates	21st – 22nd January 2013
Reporting Inspector	Mr Joseph Skivington
Accompanying Inspector	Mrs Maureen Harris
Type of school	Comprehensive
Age range of pupils	11-18
Number on roll	1,470
Local Authority	Newport City Council
Chair of Governors	Mr Paul Bennett
School Address	Pencarn Way, Tredegar Park, Newport NP10 8XH
Tel. no.	01633 653110
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E-mail address	sjhs@newport.gov.uk
Parishes served	All Saints Newport St Patrick's Newport St Gabriel's Newport St Mary's Chepstow
Date of previous inspection	22nd – 25th January 2007
Headteacher	Ms Sue M Jenkins OBE

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archdiocese of Cardiff and Inspection of denominational education under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on prospects for improvement.

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice or practise that is both consistent and highly effective.
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The table below shows the terms that Archdiocesan inspectors use and a broad idea of their meaning. It is for guidance only.

Proportion	Description
With very few exceptions	Nearly all
90% or more	Most
70% or more	Many
60% or more	A majority
Close to 50%	Half / around half
Below 40%	A minority
Below 20%	Few
Less than 10%	Very few

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Archdiocesan website: www.rcadc.org

Context

St. Joseph's RC High School is a voluntary aided' mixed 11-18 school within the Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff. It serves the Catholic population of Newport and as far as Chepstow. It is comprehensive in its intake. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and approximately 15% are eligible for free school meals. There are 1,470 students on roll, (319 in the sixth form), of whom 66.8% are baptised Catholic. 15% have special educational needs, and 16% are from ethnic minorities. Prior attainment on entry is in line with national expectations.

Summary

How effective is the school in providing Catholic education?	Excellent
Catholic education in St Joseph's High School is excellent because: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a vibrant Catholic ethos permeates every area of school life, due in large measure to inspiring school leadership, the RE department, and the proactive chaplaincy teams.• pupils make at least good progress at each Key Stage, with excellent progress at Key Stage 5.• the quality of teaching in the Religious Education department is good with some outstanding practice. There is nothing which is inadequate.• there are many excellent opportunities, many of which are planned and led by students, offered to pupils for prayer and worship. The pupil chaplaincy team makes an outstanding contribution to the spiritual life of the school.• there are many excellent opportunities for retreats, reflection and outreach to those less fortunate.• the highly effective pastoral support system looks after each individual's well-being.• there is excellent support from local parish priests.• partnership working is fruitful and highly effective, with pupils from other schools seeking religious education provision at A Level.• the recommendation from the previous inspection to increase provision at A Level has been fully met.	

What are the school's prospects for improvement?	Excellent
<p>Prospects for improvement are excellent due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the outstanding leadership and vision of the head teacher, the leadership team and governing body. • the school's self-evaluation document which is an accurate reflection of the school's strengths and where areas of development have already been identified. • the highly effective head of the Religious Education department having a clear understanding of what is needed to further develop the department and how to continue to raise standards. • a team of well-experienced and committed teachers who are willing and able to work with her to drive the department forward. • the excellent support for liturgy and PSE provided by the enthusiastic and committed chaplaincy teams. • proven excellence in using resources and personnel to tackle areas of development and a determination to seek ever better ways to help pupils achieve their full potential. • planning for improvement which is detailed and closely monitored, with clear, measurable objectives. • the distinctive Catholic ethos of the school, which recognises and nurtures the value of each individual as being made in the image of God. 	

Recommendations and Required Actions
<p>What does the school need to do to improve further?</p> <p>R1: Improve the consistency of the quality of teaching across the Religious Education department.</p> <p>R2: Improve the consistency and impact of Assessment for Learning on pupils' progress in Religious Education lessons.</p> <p>R3: Further develop the consistency, robustness and impact of challenging formative marking on pupils' progress in Religious Education over time.</p> <p>The school itself has already identified these areas and is on the way to addressing them successfully.</p>

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.
Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by the Archdiocese.

Main Findings

KQ1. How good are outcomes?

Excellent

Pupils clearly enjoy RE lessons. They have good relationships with their teachers and each other and are keen to do well. Learners understand and can articulate the teachings, beliefs and values of the Catholic Church. They are able to discuss, debate, and communicate their ideas with confidence. The opportunities provided by the department for extended, reflective writing is a real strength. Pupils across all key stages are encouraged to carry out independent learning and research to improve knowledge, understanding and skills, all made relevant and applicable to their lives.

In KS3, standards are good and continue to improve because of more effective planning and tracking of pupil progress. All groups of pupils achieve their potential. All learners show a sound knowledge of the topics studied in the programme. They understand the liturgical cycle of the Church and are clearly aware of Christian morals. Assignments are well written and assessed according to NBRIA levels. Standards reached are identified using the RE portfolios and analysed and used to inform planning.

Learners achieve very well at Key Stage 4. At GCSE all pupils are entered for the full course and are well motivated and keen to succeed. Standards of attainment are well in line with national averages and above the Welsh average. Teachers have high expectations of learners who are encouraged to be active in lessons. Less able learners are well supported in class and achieve well.

Learners display well-developed essential skills in their lessons. They listen attentively, discuss well and use extended speech where opportunities are provided. They are confident in using thinking skills strategies. They understand how their work can be improved and are keen to fulfil their potential.

A pleasing number of students opt for AS Level RE and continue to A2 Level. The A level pass rate of 100% Grades A*-E, and 82% Grades A*-C, indicates excellent progress. The course attracts students from other local schools.

The general religious education course in the sixth form also contributes to the Welsh Baccalaureate, and is both relevant and popular.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school, and benefit enormously from it. They take responsibility and ownership in the planning and presenting of liturgies through the proactive Youth Chaplaincy team. An example is the Advent Service which was a memorable event attended by the whole school community including parents and governors. The members serve as good role models for other pupils. The school council is proactive and pupils believe that their voice is heard, that their opinions matter and, where possible, these are acted upon. They generously support a wide variety of national and international charities, including Cafod, HCPT and St Anne's Hospice. Pupils are very proud of the ethos of the school and can communicate their understanding of its mission and how they translate that into their daily lives. They contribute also through their exemplary behaviour, their respect and care for one another, as well as their outreach to others beyond the school, for instance, the Cafod Action group, the

SVP who go into primary schools to help younger children, and their informative and well written contributions to the widely read school newsletter.

Pupils response to prayer and worship is outstanding. They plan, lead and participate with reverence and enthusiasm. Many of them are developing the skills of planning and presenting their own liturgies and form reflections. The Chaplaincy Team facilitates, leads and animates aspects of liturgy such as music, drama and dance, which enhance celebrations throughout the Church's year. Voluntary Masses are well attended. Altar servers and readers also contribute to parish life. The excellent prayer life makes a highly significant contribution to pupils spiritual and moral development.

KQ2. How good is provision?	Good
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The school has seven (four specialist) religious education teachers. All teachers are committed Catholics, which has a positive impact on their lessons, in particular the transmission of the Faith. All are excellent role models. They demonstrate good subject knowledge, taking advantage of Archdiocesan training and updating. Planning of lessons is good and sometimes better. Most lessons observed during inspection were good and none were inadequate. In the best lessons there was evidence of challenge and pace; independent and peer learning was encouraged. As a result pupils made good and better progress. There was a purposeful atmosphere in lessons and excellent pupil teacher relationships.

There are some outstanding examples of formative, challenging marking which sets up a dialogue between pupil and teacher, showing how the pupil can improve. As a result progress over time is rapid. The RE contribution to the extended writing element of the Welsh Baccalaureate at KS5 is outstanding. However, this exemplary practice is not yet consistent across the department. Assessment and tracking is good, and is making a growing impact on learning as the RE leadership team iron out inconsistencies in applying data to planning and strategies for individual learning needs.

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils and the requirements of the Bishops Conference. There are a variety of opportunities for prayer, retreats and well-planned liturgical celebrations. There are also opportunities through the curriculum to explore other faiths. The school's Welsh dimension is satisfactory. All lessons begin with a prayer as do all staff meetings. A reflective opportunity for staff prayer is provided every Friday morning. The RE department provides thoughtful liturgically relevant support and resources for form-based prayer. The department is well resourced and creative in its use of resources, including ICT.

KQ3. How good are leadership and management?	Excellent
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There is a strong and effective focus by leaders on the development and nurturing of the Catholic life of the school. The school's Mission statement is rooted in Gospel values and clearly informs and underpins all policies. The ethos of the school is based on the dignity and value of every human being.

The governing body makes an outstanding contribution to the school and its Catholic life. They are committed critical friends, enjoying good relationships with staff and pupils. They are very knowledgeable about the school and bring considerable expertise to the role of governor. They are involved in the evaluation and development of the RE department through the link governor, and are very clear about the development needs of the school. The governing body fulfils all canonical and statutory requirements.

The Catholic life of the school is communicated by the excellent vision and leadership of the head teacher, and her leadership team. Key to this success is the clear self-evaluating procedures that include frequent monitoring, reviews, appraisal, and focused planning for the future. This clear direction and challenging level of professionalism promotes high quality care and education. The school is fully inclusive and all are welcome in the spirit of the Gospel, with openness and respect for all. Pupils, parents and staff are unanimous and fulsome in their wholehearted support for St. Joseph's and its Catholic mission. The school takes the lead in a variety of partnerships, and transition links are well embedded. Collaboration at 16-19 sees a number of students from local schools seeking A Level RE because of the quality of teaching and its high reputation.

The Religious Education department has a prominent profile within the school and the subject is highly valued. The department leads many of the current initiatives developing pedagogy within the school. The Head of Department leads her team effectively and provides very good support for them. The department's concentration on thinking skills leads to improved achievement. The department's self review is accurate and realistic. It provides a clear agenda for the future.

The school is well supported by the parishes and open to advice and training from a wide variety of providers, for example, the Archdiocesan RE training days. The head of RE has excellent working relations with her counterparts across the Archdiocese and this promotes professional development. There are close links with parents who readily take up the invitation to be involved in all aspects of their children's education. At their meeting with inspectors, parents spoke with real understanding, gratitude, and full support for the distinctive nature of the school's Catholic ethos. Parents felt well informed about their children's education and felt consulted and involved at every key stage. At the parents' meeting many positive expressions of support were expressed regarding the partnership working between home and school. Transition arrangements were also praised. One parent said that students were empowered by being given the autonomy to solve their problems.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

All parents/carers were happy with the values and attitudes that the school fosters and say that they are made to feel welcome in the school. They agree that the school seeks their views and concerns and takes them into account. Parents stated that they chose St. Joseph's specifically because of its Catholic teaching, its caring ethos, academic success and firm discipline, and its excellent reputation within the local community. A large number of parents had been pupils at the school and wanted their children to have a similar experience.

Appendix 2

Evidence Base

- The school's self evaluation reports and other documents
- Meetings with the head teacher, the RE leadership team, member of the Youth Chaplaincy team
- Meeting with parents and carers
- Meeting with chair of governors and the governor with named responsibility for the Catholic life of the school
- Lesson observations
- Scrutiny of planning and assessment
- Scrutiny of pupils work
- Attendance at assembly and classroom based acts of worship
- Discussions with pupils
- Discussion with Youth Chaplaincy/SVP/Cafod Action Groups
- Parent questionnaire returns