

DIOCESE OF MENEVIA



Inspection Report on the Religious Dimension of the School

Head teacher:	Mrs. Claire Dineen
Reporting Inspector:	Sr. Angela Murray OSU
Accompanying Inspector:	Mr Bernard Stuart
Inspection dates:	10 th & 11 th November 2014
Chair of Governors:	Mrs. Sue Koziel
Type of School:	Voluntary Aided Primary
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11 years
Number on roll:	150
Date of previous inspection:	20 th & 24 th October 2008
School Address:	Cook Rees Avenue, Westernmoor, Neath
Tel. No:	01639 635099
Email address:	stjosephsprimary@npted.org
Parishes served:	St. Joseph's, Neath / St. John Kemble, Glynneath, Our Lady of the Assumption, Briton Ferry
Local Authority:	Neath Port Talbot Borough

*Canonical inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Menevia 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 Diocesan 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.

St. Joseph's Catholic School, situated on the eastern side of the hillside, overlooks the town of Neath. The school is set back from the road and is beautifully enhanced by the trees and a nature reserve. There are two well-designed playgrounds on either side of the school, designated specifically for Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2. The close proximity of the parish church enables the pupils to attend Mass or liturgical services on a regular basis. The school environment provides a safe, secure and stimulating environment for the pupils who attend the school.

The single-storey building houses the classrooms, library, hall, offices and kitchen. The school is in possession of a demountable classroom where Year 4 pupils are housed. The library is used for a range of intervention groups, as well as a running library. The school corridors and classrooms are bright and colourful with various displays of the pupils' work. A purpose-built outdoor area for Foundation Phase curriculum has enriched the opportunities for the pupils.

St Joseph's caters for pupils aged 3 to 11 years. The numbers in the school have increased over the last few years and there are currently one hundred and fifty pupils on roll. The pupils are drawn from the town of Neath, as well as from the surrounding areas, which include the three parishes of Neath, Glynneath and Briton Ferry. Some pupils travel as far as ten miles to the school. The pupils attending the school cover the whole socio-economic spectrum.

Currently the school has 54.6% of baptised Catholic children on roll with a further 8.6% of other Christians attending the school. There is a high percentage of pupils with no faith - 27.3% together with 9.3% of pupils belonging to other faiths. However, no pupils are withdrawn from religious education lessons or collective worship. No pupil attending the school currently has a statement of educational needs, nevertheless a total of 15% of pupils receive additional support. For 94% of pupils English is the main language of the home, with 5.3% speaking other languages. Only one family speak Welsh in the home, though not fluently. Over 25% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The breakfast club is well attended with roughly 33% attending on a daily basis, though this number changes from day to day.

There are currently 7 full time teachers, including the Head teacher, 6 of whom are Catholic. There is 1 part time teacher and 5 support staff of whom 3 are Catholic. Only 2 of the 7 teachers are in possession of the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. Three teachers attended all modules, but have not as yet qualified and 1 teacher is currently following the course. The School Mission Statement is embraced by all the staff who support and promote the Catholic ethos. A good team-spirit is evident in the working life of the school.

Many of the Governing Body are very experienced and are very supportive of the Head teacher and staff. The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and there is a close partnership between school and parish.

Summary

How effective is the school in providing Catholic education?

Good

The school is good in providing Catholic education because:

- The Catholic ethos permeates all aspects of school life.
- Pupils are well behaved, friendly, interested and enthusiastic.
- The Head teacher has a clear vision for further development of the school.
- The good standard of pastoral care.
- The shared vision for the well-being of the pupils.
- The inclusive community/parish relationship underpins the ethos.
- The overall quality of teaching in Religious Education is good.
- Interaction of pupils in the classrooms and playground is good.

What are the school's prospects for improvement?

Good

The prospects of improvement are good because:

- The Head teacher is highly motivated and has clear expectations of herself, the staff and the pupils.
- Commitment to further develop the "Come and See" programme introduced at the beginning of the year with the support of the Religious Education subject leader.
- Improve, engage and involve the whole Governing Body in "Come and See" programme in the future, including monitoring and classroom observation.
- Commitment to ensure that all teachers have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Education.
- Continue to develop robust target setting in Religious Education.

Recommendations and Required Actions

In order to improve further the school should:

R 1. Fully implement the recommendations of the previous Section 50 report –

- (a) Make consistent provision for prayer and reflection in the classroom
- (b) Provide suitably differentiated work for pupils of all abilities

R 2. Provide professional development for staff which focuses on the effective use of the NBRIA levels of attainment in Religious Education.

R 3 Further develop and ensure that assessment procedures, including marking, directly inform planning in order to provide greater challenge for all pupils to achieve higher levels of attainment, and particularly for the more able and talented pupils.

R 4 Ensure that teachers are in possession of the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies

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 Diocese.

Main Findings**KQ1. How good are outcomes?****Good**

The diocesan Religious Education programme "*Come and See*" was introduced on a whole school basis in September 2013. All classes are now on their second year of the scheme and seem to be more confident in their approach. Pictorial evidence gives a record of the work covered in 2013/2014. Pupils are very well behaved and respond enthusiastically in class. They are keen to do well, apply themselves, and have positive attitudes in their approach to religious education. They are willing to share with each other, work well in groups and obviously enjoy their religious education lessons. They move around the school in an orderly manner, are courteous, and show consideration for others.

The quality of pupils' work, together with their attainment, varies from adequate to good. The quantity of work in RE is variable and in some cases is not on a par with their literacy work. Scrutiny of written work in both subjects evidenced this. Quantity of work also varied from class to class. The questions posed did not provide sufficient challenge which resulted in closed responses.

The evaluation process after each topic is not fully embedded as yet. The tracking of topics does not feed into more robust or accurate tracking setting throughout the school. The school is in the early stage of addressing this aspect and it forms part of their School Development Plan. Pupils' work is marked positively and regularly. However, challenge needs to be posed, as responses to tasks given is too limited: different strategies need to be employed to assist more developed assessment. Differentiation of tasks would assist greater outcomes.

The weekly Celebration assembly focussed on how well pupils achieved in various ways and the certificates received were later placed on the notice board for all to see. The pupils sang "I belong to the family of God" with great enthusiasm. An Act of Collective Worship, remembering the fallen of the wars, was also observed during the inspection. Both were lead by the Head teacher. The pupils walked into the hall in an orderly manner and were reflective throughout. To the accompaniment of a CD the pupils sang the beautiful hymn "Be still for the presence of the Lord" as well as "Remember the soldiers once more".

Prayers in Welsh and English were said. Governors, teachers, parents and pupils participated by reading bidding prayers as well as lighting candles to remember those who died in the wars. A dedicated altar of remembrance was erected in the corner of the hall where the candles were placed. Teachers too, take responsibility for leading prayer and involve pupils in its delivery.

Key seasons of the Church's year are celebrated and other religious festivals acknowledged. However, pupils require greater opportunity to experience a variety of prayer, and more could be done to invite and encourage them to provide leadership. Pupils attend Mass in the Parish Church once a fortnight, as well as feast days and Holy days during the year. Parents, governors and members of the community are invited to attend. Pupils make a full contribution to Sunday Mass by serving, singing and reading.

All pupils are happy and show their happiness by their conduct on the playground, in the classrooms and at assembly. They show respect and concern for each other. After breakfast club each day all the pupils play outside on the same playground and it is evident that the older pupils look after the younger ones. There is a strong moral code and pupils have a good understanding of what is right and wrong. Pupils in year 5/6 follow the "All that I Am" programme in Personal and Social Education in accordance with Diocesan policy. There was no evidence of bullying. St Joseph's provides good pastoral care and guidance for the pupils. They have an understanding and respect for those less fortunate than themselves and are engaged in a variety of activities to relieve poverty and injustice. Fairtrade, Cafod, Food banks, Mission Together and local charities all benefit from their generosity. Pupils are reminded to respect and look after God's world. The nature reserve is a constant reminder of God's world and the need to preserve it.

Pupil voice is heard by the active School Council and Eco Council. Pupils make a valuable contribution by their engagement in fund raising for a number of projects and take pride in their achievements. Projects include raising funds for playground equipment, eco equipment, as well as the nature reserve.

KQ 2. How Good is Provision?	Good
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The "Come and See" scheme of work is used throughout the school. The school meets the Bishop's Conference requirement of 10% of curriculum time for Religious Education and the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship. Religious education therefore, is treated as a core subject within the curriculum and engages in the cross curricular opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural growth. ICT and welsh are included in the planning.

Every class in the school was observed for a lesson in Religious Education. The quality of teaching ranged from adequate to good and was judged good overall with pupils making

the progress expected. Various teaching styles were employed, and whilst the teaching was sound throughout, it lacked creativity in some cases. The pace and challenge in the lessons is not uniform, and occasionally it lacked challenge.

The school is in possession of a wide variety of resources and these were used effectively. They have invested in a variety of bibles, some new artefacts to address the different faiths and a new set of Stations of the Cross. The Catholic life of the school enjoys prominence in colourful and engaging displays. Notable among the displays was some thoughtful work from the previous topic – Family - where the display covered a selection of work from each age group on myself, families, beginnings, homes, people and ourselves.

Currently the school is undertaking the topic on Sacraments within the Domestic Church section. In Foundation Phase and Year 3 the sacrament of baptism is being covered, with Confirmation in Year 4 and Matrimony at KS2. In Foundation Phase lessons were planned to meet the age and ability of the pupils. Tasks were differentiated, particularly with the younger pupils, and the pupils responded appropriately. The ceremony of baptism was enacted in most of the classes. Many of the pupils are aware of the words used by the priest, the role of the parents and god-parents and the signs and symbols used. They were able to recall the promises made, as the pupils had taken part in the ‘hands on’ baptism ceremony of “Flick and Flack”, held at the parish church and conducted by the parish priest. This event is recorded on the iPads and pupils were able to talk about the experience and identify the different stages.

In KS 2 the sacraments of Baptism, confirmation and matrimony were undertaken. The lesson input was appropriate, though the tasks given were not sufficiently differentiated to ensure achievement at a higher level. One class observed had appropriate tasks for the less-able pupils who were supported by a teaching assistant.

In all classes where tasks required group discussion and collaboration pupils worked well together in sharing ideas and information. Class-room teaching assistants were deployed effectively.

Pupils’ work is marked in a positive manner but all pupils would benefit from a “what to do next comment or a way forward” rather than just a mark. There is evidence of pupil self assessment using the traffic light system. There was not enough evidence of ICT at KS 2 in the tasks assigned.

Assessment and tracking of pupils’ work is not yet embedded. Teachers are assessing on classroom work and there is no uniform pattern currently. The school has recognised that this is an area of development for the future.

The staff and pupils pray regularly. Each classroom has a prayer corner and a petition or prayer box. Parents and governors as well as the parish community are invited to liturgical

services at the school from time to time. Most parents felt that they were well informed about the work their children were currently undertaking.

Good use is made of the outdoor areas to provide a rich environment for learning. The school has invested a great of money to enhance these areas as well as providing a nature reserve. The school environment both indoors and outdoors provides a rich, safe and secure environment for the pupils.

KQ3. How good are Leadership and Management?

Good

The Head teacher, together with the subject leader has been involved in the implementation of the “*Come and See*” programme. They are hard working and strive to lead the school forward and show commitment to the mission of the church. The Parish Priest is also a Foundation governor as well link governor for Religious Education. He is very supportive of the school and works in close harmony with the Head Teacher and staff. Collaboration between school and parish is of the essence and preparation for First Holy Communion is undertaken jointly. The experienced Chair of Governors, together with the other governors, are well aware of their responsibilities and take them seriously. They act as ‘critical friends’ to the staff and regularly visit the school, either to observe, monitor or attend meetings. They make a valuable contribution to the life of the school.

Parents are welcomed at the school and show their support in a number of ways. There is a good communication system between them and the school, and they are kept informed of their child’s progress.

The subject leader monitors work and observes lessons. She reports back to the Head teacher and governors. She is aware that further work needs to be undertaken in addressing levels of attainment, assessment and tracking procedures. The portfolio for 2013/2014 clearly showed the work undertaken, progression and development. It is envisaged that this record of whole-school evidence of work will continue.

Self-evaluation is undertaken by both staff and governors and all were involved in the Self evaluation document produced. Performance Management includes a Religious education target as a part of the process for all teaching staff.

The school is actively engaged and involved in links with outside agencies, the local community, food banks and other charitable institutions. They hope to develop these links further, locally, nationally and globally.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

59 parents returned the questionnaires

69% of parents said that their child was happy at school and 71% stated that their child knew about spiritual awareness.

67% said that there were opportunities for them to learn about the RE programme, with 69% aware of the schools' safeguarding procedures.

Only 25% said that they work at home with their child on RE topics and 59% were aware of the links between the school and parish.

64% felt that their child was developing a sense of moral awareness. More than half of the parents were happy with the school policy on discipline.

However, some said that they were not involved in the preparation for First Holy Communion. Most parents spoke of the Catholic ethos permeating the school and the welcoming, friendly and supportive staff.

16 parents attended the inspection meeting and spoke positively about the school, its work and their involvement in the child's education. They considered it was a nurturing environment for their child, and that problems were dealt with quickly when they arose.

Appendix 2

Evidence Base

- The school's self-evaluation reports and other relevant documentation
- Meetings with the Head teacher and religious education subject leader
- Meetings with representatives of the governing body, including the religious education link governor and chair
- A meeting with parents
- Parent/carer questionnaire returns
- Lesson observations
- Scrutiny of planning and assessment

- Scrutiny of pupils' work
- Scrutiny of displays and prayer foci
- Attendance at whole school acts of worship
- Discussions with pupils
- Discussions with teaching staff
- Observation of daily routines
- Meeting with School Council and Eco Council

The diocesan inspectors wish to express sincere thanks to the governors, head teacher, staff, pupils and parents and also to the ESTYN registered inspector and inspection team for the courtesy and co-operation received during the inspection.