



DIOCESAN CANONICAL INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL, RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Armada Drive, Leicester, LE5 1HF

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| School URN: | 138115 |
| Inspection Date: | 06 April 2022 |
| Inspectors: | Mrs F Boucher and Mrs C Mann |

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| Overall Effectiveness | Previous Inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | This Inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Catholic Life: | | Good | 2 |
| Religious Education: | | Good | 2 |
| Collective Worship: | | Good | 2 |

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy is a good Catholic school.

- The commitment of leaders, at all levels, ensures that St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy remains a good Catholic school. The headteacher is driven and leads the school community with increasing effectiveness; parents and governors have been particularly impressed with the speed with which she has made a positive impact on school life and development, having taken up her post in 2020. Relationships are strong and mutually respectful, resulting in a shared commitment to ongoing spiritual and educational improvement. Leaders, including governors, are well placed to further develop systems for school self-evaluation.
- Catholic Life is clearly expressed in the school's mission, which is well known to all: pupils can articulate that, 'with God's guidance, we love, learn, respect and forgive' at St Joseph's. There is a clear sense of community, where mutual support abides and prayer life is central. There are visible signs of Catholicity throughout the school; displays and artefacts reflect the importance of this area of school life. Pupils' behaviour is consistently good: high standards are expected and realised.
- Leaders have worked hard to improve Religious Education since the last diocesan canonical inspection: the provision is now good, notably as a result of improved systems for assessment, marking and feedback. Teachers take time in lessons to promote theological literacy so that pupils can express themselves with greater clarity and reference the links between learning and life. As a result, most pupils, from their starting points, make good progress across the school. The next steps include reviewing the precision of subject planning and identifying the requisite knowledge for pupils to retain in Religious Education.
- Collective Worship has grown and developed significantly since the last inspection: there is a broad diet of prayer and liturgy on offer. The appointment of a lay chaplain, alongside strong links to chaplaincy provision through the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, has enhanced prayer and worship at St Joseph's – and impacted positively on the personal development of pupils. Pupil-led liturgy is embedding: the opportunity to regularly lead worship should now be extended to wider groups of pupils.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy is part of the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust in the Diocese of Nottingham.
- The school serves the parish of St Joseph's in Leicester and the surrounding area.
- There are 248 pupils on roll at the school. 56% of the pupil population are baptized Catholics; 23% of pupils are from other Christian denominations; 9% of pupils belong to another faith tradition; 13% of pupils have no religious affiliation.
- 16% of pupils require additional school support in respect of their special education needs and/or a disability. Less than 1% of pupils have in place an educational, health and care plan.
- 25% of pupils are in receipt of pupil premium funding, which is above the national average figure. This money is used to provide additional support for pupils who, for example, receive free school meals or are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, with the largest groups being of Indian heritage. An above-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship
 - Leaders, including governors, should now sharpen their self-evaluation skills, procedures and judgements for the areas of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- Religious Education
 - Ensure that Religious Education is coherently planned so that pupils have the knowledge and skills required to be ready for the next stage or phase of their education. Furthermore, the planning for mixed-aged classes needs to be reviewed as a matter of urgency.
 - Ensure that teachers further develop their subject expertise in relation to the use of 'driver' words so that this is more explicit and accurate during lessons and learning, enabling all pupils across the school to improve and retain key knowledge in Religious Education.
- Collective Worship
 - Further build upon plans to ensure that wider groups of pupils have regular opportunities to lead worship.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

2

- 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 governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school – good

- The Catholic Life and mission of the school is appreciated and valued by most pupils. This can be seen not only in the active participation of pupils in times of worship but also in the quality of relationships pupils develop with each other. Pupils explain that their school's mission 'helps us to forgive and respect others in a special way...as that's the way of Jesus'.
- Most pupils show a respect for themselves and others: their behaviour is consistently good. Pupils understand how to 'live out' their faith in day-to-day life, recognising the importance of treating new pupils well. They say, 'We give them respect and make them feel that they are made for this school – that they are at home'.
- Most pupils are regularly involved with activities which support and promote the Catholic Life of the school, mindful the needs of others within and beyond the school family. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about bake sales, non-school uniform days, collections for the local foodbank and the activities of CAFOD Club – all of which raise much needed funds and goods for chosen charities.
- Most pupils value the school's chaplaincy provision: they talk about the value added by their lay chaplain, with whom they love to work; they can talk about the variety of times when, and ways in which, they pray, showing reverence and interest in these times. Pupils would benefit from an opportunity for a wider number of pupils to lead liturgy more frequently and from their earliest years.
- Pupils generally reflect self-confidence and an understanding of self-worth: they feel valued at St Joseph's, saying, 'You can be you in this school'. They explain that, if they have any worries, they are free to share these with members of staff. Pupils know what is expected of them and are secure within their environment. The use of their gifts for the benefit of others is understood by pupils.
- Pupils have, appropriate to their age, a good understanding of loving relationships and sexual development within a Catholic context.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school – good

- The school's mission clearly expresses the educational mission of the Church. Most staff are committed to its implementation, threading this through the curriculum as well as through the provision of activities linked to the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of positive relationships, at all levels, reflects the sense of community at St Joseph's, which has strengthened through the hard work of the team throughout the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a supportive school environment where staff model respectful behaviour, recognising that they are role models for pupils and others.
- The provision for Catholic Life ensures that outward signs of Catholicity can be seen throughout the school setting. Time and care have been taken, in the artefacts carefully chosen and displays thoughtfully constructed, to reflect the school's Catholic character, which celebrates the faith dimension of the school. This is particularly evident through the visible records of the school's recently celebrated Diamond Jubilee, with palpable excitement and pride that the bishop visited to celebrate Mass with the school family.
- The school provides many opportunities for the moral and spiritual development of pupils and staff, who engage well. For example, staff have explored a variety of ways to enhance their skills when leading worship, leading to more uplifting experiences for all concerned.
- Opportunities are taken to further develop aspects of the wider curriculum so that God's kingdom can be more readily built on earth. This is carried out through infusing various subjects with the Catholic character of the school, linking social justice into activities within the pupils' timetable in subjects other than Religious Education.
- Pastoral care features in the Catholic Life of the school, so that the needs of staff as well as pupils are considered. Programmes which support pupils' personal development are well taught and reflect the teaching of the Catholic Church.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school – good

- Leaders, including governors, demonstrate a public commitment to the mission of the Church, modelling Catholic leadership in an increasingly effective manner. Catholic Life is rightly prized by those who lead, with the headteacher (newly in post since the last inspection) guiding the way and demonstrating her commitment for the school to further grow and develop in its Catholicity.
- Leaders know the school well and have an accurate picture of what is working well and where improvements are required: their plans attest to this. However, written self-evaluation is not yet focused enough to show the outcomes of monitoring activities and reviews, therefore the impact of these tasks is not yet fully captured. A development point is therefore to sharpen the evaluation of Catholic Life further – a target which neatly aligns with development areas for the leadership of Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- Continual professional development for staff is frequent and effective. As a consequence, staff are clear about the school's mission and are involved in the shaping of Catholic Life at St Joseph's. As a result, the school responds well to diocesan policies and initiatives, promoting the bishop's themes for diocesan schools.
- Leaders, including governors, have good strategies for engaging with the majority of parents. Parents, in return, acknowledge the good work of leaders and, in particular, the headteacher since her arrival. Parents say that strengths of the school can be found in the way in which they are listened to; they feel that staff have become more engaged with them, as parents, over the last two years. Parents enjoy being invited to celebrations, though they would like to see a wider group of pupils involved in planning and leading worship; they would also like to see the school's faith dimension even more overtly.

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- The local governing body is ambitious for the school; governors are a committed group who contribute well, finding a balance between providing support and challenge to school leaders in order to keep moving along the journey of improvement. They are now in a good position to become more involved in the activities associated with, and the constructing and recording of, school self-evaluation documentation.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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| THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION | 2 |
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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education – good

- Pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons in Religious Education. Behaviour for learning is good, with no low-level disruption. Pupils participate with interest and are settled and ready to work, showing increasingly high levels of engagement. Pupils listen and collaborate with each other with respect and are focused when working individually, with partners or in small groups.
- Pupils enjoy and value learning about other faiths; they respect the beliefs of others. Pupils speak at length about their recent Sikhism lessons, what they learned and how they celebrate the diversity within their school community. As part of the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) curriculum, the 'Journey in Love' scheme is followed; this ensures that teaching is in accordance with the norms of the Catholic Church.
- Assessment information, which is validated through diocesan-wide moderation, shows that the vast majority of pupils in all year groups make good progress. On the rare occasion where a pupil, or group of pupils, struggles to understand an aspect of their learning, teachers are quick to address this through targeted interventions. Pupils, relative to their age, know what their 'next steps' are in learning and will frequently use this information to improve their responses in Religious Education workbooks.
- Pupils generally make good progress towards the end of year expectations set by the diocese; however, immediate action must be taken to address the disparities in content taught between pupils in different classes but within the same year groups, to ensure equality in their curricular experiences.
- The quality of pupils' work in terms of output and coverage is improving. The pupils take pride in their Religious Education books, where there is evidence of extended pieces of writing. Diocesan expectations are met fully.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education – good

- The quality of teaching is good. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision at St Joseph's, led by the Religious Education subject leader, is a strength, as is the close work with the nursery provision which has established a positive religious understanding and formation for all pupils.
- Within lessons, core religious teaching and subsequent questioning is appropriately targeted, enabling pupils to articulate and capture their thoughts. Teachers expertly promote discussion amongst pupils developing religious literacy, raising levels of engagement and allowing pupils the opportunity to further develop their thinking and understanding.
- Secure teacher subject knowledge is evident throughout the school and teachers work collaboratively, preparing interesting Religious Education lessons to engage pupils of all ability levels. Lessons are punctuated with moments of prayer and reflection. The 'driver' words are evident in many lessons and used effectively in some: they are beginning to shape feedback to pupils. Leaders recognise that further professional development of teachers is required to ensure that pupils acquire and retain the relevant knowledge and skills needed to make progress through the Religious Education curriculum.
- The 'Come and See' Religious Education programme is used throughout the school; teachers creatively link curriculum content to the school's context and prior learning whenever possible. Teachers incorporate 'heart' and 'wonder' moments within lessons across all year groups, which is strengthening pupils' religious literacy. Teachers must now review their lesson plans and learning sequences to ensure that Religious Education is well-planned so that pupils have the knowledge and skills they need to progress to the next level or phase of their education.
- Marking and constructive feedback occur regularly within Religious Education workbooks; pupils are clear as to what they have done well in their work and where there are misconceptions or areas for development. Where a response or a development to an answer from the teacher is requested, pupils generally take time to reshape their thinking and improve their understanding. Assessment in Religious Education is accurate and is captured on a regular basis. Assessed pieces of work show that the pupils are capable of producing work of quality and quantity.
- Throughout the pandemic, teachers used a variety of methods to engage pupils in Religious Education, both in school and at home. During periods of home learning, parents and the pupils spoke warmly of the care and support provided by the staff at St Joseph's.

The extent to which leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education – good

- The new headteacher has been instrumental in bringing about significant improvements in the religious life of the school as highlighted by parents, governors and staff. The headteacher collaborates closely with the Religious Education subject leader and the senior leadership team. They are reflective practitioners who are eager to continue to develop staff so that they can deliver the curriculum with confidence and knowledge. The school's self-evaluation of Religious Education is accurate, but leaders must continue to sharpen their skills, procedures and judgments to ensure that Religious Education continues to improve.
- The Religious Education curriculum meets episcopal requirements for Religious Education curriculum time. Leaders have aided staff in embedding the 'Come and See' programme, which has developed appropriately to meet the needs and interests of the pupils of St Joseph's. The curriculum allows pupils to develop spiritually, morally, and culturally: some are well prepared for their next stage of education. Leaders must now act quickly to review the curriculum's sequence and breadth to ensure that all pupils acquire the necessary knowledge and skills within each key stage
- Despite the challenges of the pandemic, leaders have placed a high priority on staff professional development, and, as a result, teachers' subject knowledge and confidence in teaching and assessing Religious Education have improved since the last inspection.

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- The subject leader for Religious Education has engaged fully in diocesan training. The subject leader for Religious Education is committed to school improvement and cascades diocesan initiatives at school level. Along with the senior leadership team, she regularly monitors provision, addressing areas for development as required.

- Local governors keep in touch with the headteacher on a regular basis to ensure that support is provided. They are becoming more aware of the school's curriculum expectations under the new leadership structure and following the pandemic. Religious Education is important to the governing body and this can be seen through minutes from governor meetings as well as monitoring activities.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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| THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP | 2 |
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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for the Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship – good

- Pupils act with reverence and are keen to participate in Collective Worship. They are still and quiet in prayer; they show good attention to those leading worship; they respond appropriately and positively to spiritual experiences.
- Pupils who lead worship regularly show confidence and a degree of independence; they are supported by the lay chaplain, whose experience and skills are enabling pupils to improve their own leadership abilities. Pupils, on a wider scale, now need to have the opportunity to lead worship within their key stage or in a whole school situation, so that they, too, can develop their capabilities further and from an earlier stage.
- Pupils use a variety of approaches to prayer, including scripture, religious artefacts and video clips. These serve to engage and hold the interest of others; they add variety; they are well chosen. In classrooms, pupils respond positively to times set aside for personal prayer, exploring the season of Lent using individual prayer journals as a way of capturing and reflecting upon their own spiritual journey.
- Most pupils have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year; planned worship takes account of seasons and feasts, as do records of liturgies celebrated throughout the year.
- There is a well-developed sense of respect in pupils for those of other faiths, reflected in the relationships amongst pupils during worship, discussion and throughout the school day. Pupils show knowledge of and interest in other faith traditions, demonstrating positivity and openness; pupils are accepting of others. They show an understanding of missionary discipleship, taking Jesus as a model to follow in prayer as well as life.
- From the start of their education, pupils are immersed in prayer life. Pupils from a very young age show respect for each other, appreciate the opportunity to be part of a praying community and take part fully in Collective Worship experiences, showing that they are now ready to take an active leadership in this aspect of school life.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship – good

- Collective Worship is embedded in school life; prayer is a regular and important feature each day. Provision ensures that there are a range of opportunities on offer, so that members of the school community pray as a class, a key stage and a school as well as at other, voluntary times – such as at 'Monday Group', during dinnertime, or by pausing at one of the school's prayer stations.
- Collective Worship has a purpose or theme: it is planned to have relevance to those gathered, in keeping with the liturgical season. This approach supports the Catholic character of the school and enriches spiritual experiences.
- Older pupils have more extensive opportunities to lead worship. The Chaplaincy team does this most frequently, with pupils in Key Stage 2 classes working alongside the lay chaplain on occasion to prepare class liturgy. Pupils throughout the school are now ready to be guided by staff in order to learn, from an earlier stage, how to prepare and lead Collective Worship on a regular basis.
- Collective Worship is given priority within this school: the development of prayer and liturgy, and the appointment of the lay chaplain since the last inspection, supports this view. Planning and resourcing is well embedded; evaluation is an ongoing development.
- Staff are well informed; they attend regular professional development sessions and courses; they work well with colleagues from the diocese and from within the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust. As a result, Collective Worship experiences for the school community are good and developing. Parents and parishioners enjoy being part of celebrations: they look forward to more opportunities to do so, following the COVID-19 pandemic.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship – good

- Leaders know how to plan and deliver quality Collective Worship: the headteacher leads by example on a regular basis in this regard. Key members of staff, including the lay chaplain, show a good understanding of what is required. Further enhancement is gained through the strong partnership with the parish and parish priest.
- Leaders of Collective Worship are models of good practice. They ensure that the Church's liturgical year is reinforced and celebrated through their choice of scripture, song and prayer; they foster positive relationships and a growing partnership with the parish.
- Leaders, including governors, are keen to ensure that pupil-led liturgy grows and develops; they are committed to worship being relevant and accessible to pupils. By engaging more pupils in planning and leading liturgy, opportunities can be taken by leaders to make this even more impactful.
- Leaders, including governors, regularly review Collective Worship and rightly see this as an important aspect of their role. Systems for improving self-evaluation activities and written documentation will help to evidence the positive impact of actions, as well as more easily directing ongoing development and target-setting in the area of Collective Worship.
- Leaders, including governors, ensure that professional development opportunities for staff are regular and effective; they understand the need for regular liturgical formation and make the most of diocesan and trust-based courses and events.

SCHOOL DETAILS

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| School Name | St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy |
| Unique Reference Number | 138115 |
| CMAT | St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust |

The inspection of this school was carried out on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham under Canon 806 of Canon Law in accordance with the *evaluation schedule* for diocesan canonical inspections in the Diocese of Nottingham. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. The process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule is in line with the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA).

During the inspection, the inspectors observed 8 Religious Education lessons and 3 Acts of Collective Worship.

Meetings were held with the headteacher, the subject leader for Religious Education, the trust's lead lay chaplain and the school's lay chaplain, the trust's CEO and a group of governors. A telephone discussion was held with the parish priest. Discussions were also held with pupils and parents.

The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including reports of the governing body, action plans, the school development plan, monitoring forms, assessment information and parental response forms. Inspectors also examined the work in pupils' Religious Education books.

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| Chair of Governors: | Mr D O'Brien |
| Headteacher: | Mrs C Dedman |
| Date of Previous School Inspection: | 30 April 2015 |
| Telephone Number: | 0116 241 6197 |
| Email Address: | office@st-josephs.leicester.sch.uk |

WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN

Within the report, the following grades are used:

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| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Requires Improvement |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

In the context of the whole school, the overall effectiveness grades have the following meaning:

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| Grade 1 | Outstanding | The school is a highly effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are exceptionally well met. |
| Grade 2 | Good | The school is an effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are met well. |
| Grade 3 | Requires Improvement | The school is not yet a good Catholic school, it is not inadequate however, and there are aspects that require improvement. There will be a monitoring visit within the next 18 months and the school will be re-inspected within 3 years. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | There are features in need of urgent and immediate attention. The school is not meeting the basic minimum requirement for adequacy as a Catholic school. The school will receive an annual monitoring visit and will be re-inspected within 3 years. |