



DIOCESE OF **Arundel and Brighton**

DENOMINATIONAL (S48) CATHOLIC SCHOOL INSPECTION  
REPORT

School: St Joseph's Specialist Trust  
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School Unique Reference Number: 125456

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<b>Chair of Governors:</b>	Bernard Smith
<b>Lead Inspector:</b>	Peter Ward
<b>Associate Inspector:</b>	Sarah Conrad
<b>Inspection date:</b>	3 December 2019

	Previous Inspection:
<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	1
	This inspection:
<b>Catholic Life:</b>	1
<b>Religious Education:</b>	1
<b>Collective Worship:</b>	1

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

St Joseph's is an Outstanding Catholic school because:

<p>It provides outstanding education for all students in a specialist caring environment where all are recognised as children of God. Students enjoy school and make excellent progress because of the highly committed staff team led by an exceptional leadership team committed to self-improvement for the benefit of all. St Joseph's is an outward-facing school readily networking for the benefit of special education. Areas for development identified by the last inspection have been fully addressed.</p>	<p>Knowledgeable staff constantly refine a flexible curriculum, adapted to the particular needs of students. Lessons that engage and challenge students are well planned and delivered so that they achieve valuable and secure learning. Careful assessment of pupil knowledge and progress is well documented and analysed so that the school has accurate information from which to constantly monitor and evaluate its provision.</p>
<p>The well-chosen mission statement 'Christ in our lives – no limits, just possibilities' provides inspirational direction to, and is realised in, the life and work of the school. There is a strong sense of community; relationships throughout the school community are excellent. Students and their families are drawn from a wide area and from many faiths, beliefs and cultures yet all are included and engaged by the Catholic life of the school.</p>	<p>Students experience a rich and varied programme of prayer, worship and liturgy through a wide range of carefully chosen celebrations that recognise personal needs and learning styles and respond positively. Occasions of quiet prayer and reflection also contribute significantly to the experience of all members of the school and extended community. Admission to the sacraments is open to all Catholic children reflecting the conviction that there is no such thing as spiritual impairment.</p>

# **FULL REPORT**

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

- St Joseph's is a School and College for students with severe and complex learning difficulties.
- The school and college has non-maintained status. It ceased to be in the trusteeship of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton and became a charitable incorporated organisation on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018.
- It is located within the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. It is situated in the Guildford Deanery.
- There are in excess of seventeen placing authorities from the English Midlands to the south coast including London Boroughs.
- The proportion of students who are baptised Catholics is 24.24%
- The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10% across all key stages.
- The school takes students from 5 to 19 years. The number of students currently on roll is 72.
- The attainment of students on entering St Joseph's is well below average. Many students have complex needs, including students with SLD (Severe Learning Difficulties) and MLD (Moderate Learning Difficulties) and all have EHC (Education, Health and Care) Plans. Most students are also on the Autistic Spectrum and require a highly specialist provision.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage and others are from a range of ethnic backgrounds including Black Caribbean, African and Asian.
- There are thirteen looked after students.
- The school has achieved autism accreditation and Specialist Schools' Status in the area of Communication and Interaction and also Creative Arts.

## **WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

- Ensure that planned Religious Education activities are driven by clear Religious Education-based learning objectives, carefully assessed and appropriately reinforced so that teaching is generally Outstanding and never less than consistently Good.
- Ensure that the distributed Catholic school leadership is manifest in the life of the school.

## CATHOLIC LIFE

### THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

- The extent to which students contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision of 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 students contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is Outstanding**

- Appropriate to their age and capacity, students appreciate and share the strong sense of a secure community that is St Joseph's, rooted in its Catholic Christian foundation and lived out daily by all its members. Irrespective of faith or belief, they readily participate in its rich range of activities, including prayer and worship, often saying the school prayer with a degree of passion. They enjoy taking part in deanery and diocesan events such as the Good Shepherd celebration and secondary school pilgrimage.
- They review events in the life of the school, including its Catholic character and mission, and contribute to shaping the future through the Student Ideas Council. They are respectful of one another, mindful of the dignity of each and reflecting the clear modelling of respect by staff members. One student told inspectors 'everyone is special, for better or worse'. Students readily forgive and are forgiven; they are also quick to support and to congratulate others.
- Students embrace the school's commitment to social justice, supporting national, international and Catholic charities including CAFOD and Missio. They are increasingly appreciating and valuing the natural world through horticulture lessons and opportunities for work experience involving animals and broader farm work in addition to the annual harvest festival celebration.

### **The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is Outstanding**

- The school's mission statement 'Christ in our lives – no limits, just possibilities' encapsulates the common understanding of the nature and aspiration of St Joseph's. It is emblazoned on all staff uniforms and is manifested in the curriculum, daily life and routines of students, according to their age and capability, and staff alike.

- Teaching and support staff strive to realise the mission in their daily interactions with students, thereby enhancing the strong sense of community evident in the quality of relationships throughout the school. Prayer, worship and celebration reflect and magnify the common endeavour, drawing inspiration from the rich chaplaincy provision that supports both student and staff prayer and reflection opportunities. Art and artefacts throughout the learning environment further reinforce the Catholic identity which is also a feature of the entire curriculum because, as one teacher expressed it to an inspector 'God is a creator God and that leads to a holistic curriculum'.
- Pastoral care of all members of the school community is recognised by governors and school leaders as a core responsibility. It is key to the education of students at St Joseph's so thoughtful, precise, well-judged policies and practices are in place and regularly reviewed. Staff in their many roles undertake this pastoral care as well as promoting and modelling high standards of behaviour of students. This can be very challenging as well as rewarding so extensive pastoral care and support for staff is also in place.
- Pastoral programmes including personal, social and health education and relationships and sex education are core curriculum areas, but specific provision is tailored to individual student needs by specialist staff. Much is provided on an individual basis but there is also some class teaching, both employing a range of strategies including 'books beyond words' and role play. Careful assessment of progress is recorded and contributes to the whole-school assessment database.

### **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is Outstanding**

- Leaders and governors are fully committed to promoting the Catholic life of the school and securing consistent improvement. Governors are actively involved in the strategic direction of the school, critically reviewing progress and holding school leaders to account. Staff confirmed to inspectors the real breadth and depth of commitment of school leaders including the leader of Catholic life, who is head of religious education and school chaplain, to promoting the Catholic character of the school.
- The school recognises parents and carers as members of the school community and seeks to promote links through the regular newsletter and email, recognising that many are unable to attend school events and celebrations because of distance. A recent survey of parental opinion was consistently positive.
- Self-evaluation and review of Catholic school life and practice is an integral part of embedded whole-school policy. The school's commitment to this is clearly shown on the school's website where all key strategic documents, including the termly strategic evaluation summary, can be viewed. One recent example of a significant development was the introduction in 2018/19 of class assemblies which serve to support both the pastoral and spiritual development of students.

- Leaders and governors ensure that the whole curriculum contributes to students' spiritual life because it reflects and reinforces the belief in the dignity of every human person made in the image of God. In addition, curriculum areas such as music and singing specifically complement prayer and worship while art makes a substantial contribution to religious education.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- How well students achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching 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 students achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is Outstanding

- Students enjoy religious education lessons. They are engaged by a wide range of teaching strategies and practical tasks using a variety of resources including sensory resources. Students' interest was evidently engaged and sustained in the lessons observed. They make progress in religious education because lessons are carefully structured to enable students to make incremental progress with the thoughtful support provided by support staff members who facilitate each student's personalised learning.
- In almost all key stages, all students make average or above average progress compared to those of similar age and cognitive ability nationally; in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 the majority make above average progress. Similar levels of progress have been sustained for the last three years. Students enjoy their lessons and show a consistent degree of engagement. Individual students have successfully obtained Welsh Joint Examination Committee certification.
- Students are able to talk about their learning and are becoming religiously literate. One student displayed a wide vocabulary for describing the attributes of God and later gave a clear introduction to a mosque.

## **The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is Good**

- Teachers seek to draw on their strong subject knowledge and excellent knowledge of students' attainment to plan well-structured and differentiated learning to advance students' Religious Education. They are highly skilled and experienced in using teaching methods and strategies, including individual and where appropriate, collaborative work appropriate to the individual students in each class. They use a wide range of resources matched to student needs that engage and motivate students and sustain high levels of concentration. Strong features of lessons include sensory and visual approaches, employing good autism practice. Consequently, almost all students are inspired to learn and make strong progress.
- Learning objectives, tasks and activities are differentiated. For those who are generally non-verbal and have some medical or personal care needs, differentiation is generally individually targeted and personalised. Non-verbal students are supported to develop a visual religious literacy with meticulously targeted and prepared resources and the use of MAKATON. Learning support staff are fully briefed and so are able to support learning, willingly participating for example in facilitating individual learning tasks and in student role-playing.
- Assessment and feedback follow the whole school approach and model, matched to Performance ['P'] scales and attainment levels. Teachers systematically monitor students' understanding in order to provide support that enables students to advance their learning. Celebration of students' achievement and effort are central to the teachers' assessment strategy. Formal half termly assessment is entered into the whole school database which enables the progress of each student to be compared with others with severe learning needs nationally.

## **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is Outstanding**

- The religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and embraces the diocesan Bishop's commitment to care for our common home set out in his Advent 2019 pastoral letter. Religious education has full parity with other core curriculum subjects.
- Leaders and governors are manifestly committed to religious education and its key role in the life of the school. The Executive Principal line manages the leader for Catholic life and they meet regularly while the link governor for Catholic life also meets him termly. A termly subject report to school leaders and to governors ensures that leaders and governors are fully informed as they review the comprehensive action plan and plan strategic developments.

- The leader for Catholic life is strongly committed to ensuring that subject teachers enable religious education to contribute significantly to the human flourishing of each student. He draws upon their high level of subject knowledge and pedagogical skill and the talents of others for the benefit of each student.

He has also effectively integrated religious education into the whole school curriculum including a number of visits throughout the year, notably to Wintershall.

- The school continues to assess student attainment in all subjects using Progress [P] sales and national curriculum levels in common with most special schools. These measures, broken into many sub-units are used effectively and robustly in religious education to enable staff to plan appropriate learning steps. The leader for Catholic life was part of the diocesan working party that trialled and introduced the new diocesan assessment framework and will implement it in line with school policy.
- The school uses the 'Come and See' programme of religious education, appropriately modified and creatively structured to meet the needs and engage the interest of their students.

## **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP / PRAYER AND PRAYER LIFE**

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- How well students respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life

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### **How well students respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is Outstanding**

- Students, appropriate to their age and capacity, engage wholeheartedly in all forms of collective worship. They speak positively of their experience and can explain their emotions and feelings. They understand that special behaviour is required during prayer and worship. Inspectors observed one circle time (morning) and one candle time (afternoon) tutor group prayer occasions. Form tutors skilfully integrated them into tutor time routines yet ensured that they were clearly distinct, each with a clear theme. Students participated and contributed in a positive manner, including all saying the school prayer.

- Several students told inspectors about the Christingle service held the previous day and how it was led by students. Students contribute ideas and comments on liturgical celebrations through the Student Ideas Council and directly to the leader for Catholic life. One such suggestion this academic year involved the school celebrating All Saints Day with a procession of flags bearing the insignia of saints and included a prayer written by the student whose idea it was. This liturgy was spontaneously recalled by several students.
- Prayer and worship, including Mass, are inclusive, all students being able to participate. Prayer and worship contributes to the spiritual and moral development of students. One student while talking with inspectors instead of saying the school prayer eloquently shared a spontaneous prayer. Another student confidently told inspectors 'I can pray when I want to'. Celebrations often have a profound impact on students, the dramatisation of the events of Holy Week being one such occasion.

### **The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is Outstanding**

- Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school community and a key part of school celebrations. Regular whole-school celebrations are imaginatively planned and well led so that all students are engaged. Staff model engagement to support students, MAKATON signing and singing and participating fully. All students have access to all liturgies and for those who struggle with larger gatherings, an alternative, quieter experience is offered in the chapel. Thus, all students have the opportunity for prayer, worship and reflection. Form tutors, together with support staff, celebrate morning and evening 'circle time' and 'candle time' that engages and involves students. Each classroom has a prayer focus which reflects the liturgical season with appropriately coloured sensory artefacts.
- Whole school Mass is celebrated each term. The Liturgy of the Word is celebrated more frequently in order to introduce students to prayer and the sacraments, including the Eucharist, in a step by step approach. In Advent and Lent the sacrament of reconciliation is available to students and staff, the visiting priest also being available for non-sacramental conversations. Parents/carers and grand-parents are invited to all liturgies and some for whom distance is not a barrier attend regularly. There are also regular opportunities and occasions for staff prayer. Each staff briefing concludes with a reflection. Staff liturgies are a feature of the beginning and end of term and of INSET days. There is also a regular voluntary ecumenical staff prayer group. Sunday Mass is now celebrated at least termly, attracting a small congregation representative of the St Joseph's community and their families, irrespective of faith background.
- Prayer and worship prompt some students to increase their participation in the Catholic Church by choosing to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist or Confirmation. Each is supported with a personalised programme of instruction and accompanied on their faith journey. Their sacramental initiation liturgy is also adapted to meet their personal needs. Six students are currently receiving instruction; three were confirmed by Bishop Richard in March 2017.

## **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is Outstanding**

- Occasions of prayer and worship are carefully planned by senior leaders with a strong knowledge of school prayer and praise so as to engage all students. These celebrations are a core feature of school life and devised as an integral part of the school and liturgical year. Students are encouraged and supported to participate in the planning and leadership of prayer and worship.
- School leaders are excellent authentic role models, leading and participating in school worship. Regular staff training complementing weekly staff prayer supports all staff members to develop their own spirituality so that they can lead tutor prayers confidently as well as facilitating and modelling engagement to support students.
- Prayer and worship are embedded in the cycle of school improvement planning in order to enhance the spiritual development of students. It is part of school monitoring and evaluation. Governors regularly attend school celebrations of collective worship to fulfil their monitoring role as well as being members of the wider school community. They also contribute feedback alongside students' families that complements the internal school procedures.

## Summary of Inspection Judgements

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

**1**

### Catholic Life

**1**

The extent to which students 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 governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

**1**

### Religious Education

**1**

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

**1**

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education

**2**

How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

**1**

### Collective Worship and Prayer Life

**1**

How well students respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

**1**

The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

**1**

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

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