

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



Inspection Report of Denominational Character and Religious Education

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

St Joseph's Catholic High School (St Peter Catholic Academy Trust)

DfE School No:	871/4800
URN:	143803
Headteacher:	Mr Ciran Stapleton
Chair Board of Governors	Dr Elizabeth Duffy
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Peter Ward
Associate Inspector:	Mr Matthew Dell
Date of Inspection:	26-27 November 2018
Date previous Inspection:	May 2017

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese working within the
St Peter Catholic Academy Trust

Information about the school

St Joseph's is an 11-18 co-educational school in the Diocese of Northampton. The school is an academy and part of the St Peter Catholic Academy Trust. There are 98 staff, of which 66 are teaching staff and 41 are practising Catholics. There are 946 pupils on roll of which 71% are Catholic, the remainder coming mainly from other Christian traditions. 79.5% of the pupils are from ethnic minorities, 58% have English as an additional language – most of whom are from Eastern Europe. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is 15% with a further 6% eligible for free school meals. Under the leadership of the current headteacher, the school has been rapidly transformed and is significantly oversubscribed, being placed in the top 10% of the country for 3 of the last 4 years for pupil progress. St Joseph's was approached by the diocese to support another secondary school, significantly contributing to that school's rapid transformation in 2017-18. It continues to lend its support.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Joseph's is an outstanding Catholic school which is oversubscribed and with an increasing proportion of children from Catholic families because it is an avowedly Catholic school community committed to supporting every member to achieve their God-given potential. The vision and dedication of the headteacher to Catholic education is fully shared by the senior leadership team. Consequently the school has a secure and supportive Catholic ethos. This underpins the life of the school and service of the local community, exemplified by the care and attention devoted to pastoral care of all, not least those in greatest need. Chaplaincy is a particular strength of the school. Led by an exceptional chaplain, the substantial range of opportunities for prayer, worship and religious engagement are steadily increasing, as is the number of pupil members of the chaplaincy team. Pupils make outstanding progress in religious education. This reflects the commitment of the team of subject specialists led by a dedicated head of department.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

St Joseph's has addressed all items identified in the May 2017 report and made substantial progress in other areas. It has also contributed to the transformation of another diocesan secondary school in the academic year 2017-18. The whole school community contributed to the development of the new mission statement – 'Unlocking Belief in All'. The school development plan is based on rigorous monitoring procedures to achieve clear targets which includes further embedding the pupil profile, 16 paired Christian virtues. Outcomes in religious education in all key stages has improved further, with progress by students sitting GCSE Religious Studies (RS) being among the highest in the country. Chaplaincy continues to develop, to involve more pupils and staff and to expand its impact.

School leaders and managers have a realistic appreciation of the school as a result of a combination of rigorous and robust regular analysis of current school data and systematic evaluation of events in the life of the school.

The Catholic vision of educating the whole person to live fully is at the heart of the integral vision of the school. It is shared by the headteacher, senior leadership team, governors and directors and is reflected by staff in their different contributions to the education of each pupil. Opportunities to enhance the Catholic life continue to be explored and implemented. Religious education is recognised to be a key core subject and supported accordingly. Opportunities to further develop collective worship, already well embedded in the daily life of the school, are constantly being explored by the chaplain, supported by the members of the chaplaincy team.

The school has a demonstrable record of improvement in all areas over recent years and in addition has devoted resources to support another diocesan school to secure its position. Accordingly there is excellent capacity to further enhance its effectiveness as a Catholic school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enhance the chaplaincy provision by increasing the range of expertise that contributes to the planning and celebration of prayer, worship and school liturgies.
- Support teachers of religious education to develop a 'mastery' approach to teaching.

Catholic Life

Grade 1

Pupils confirmed the inspection judgement that they enjoy being members of this Catholic school community, appreciate its values and willingly participate in its Catholic life and mission. Behaviour is generally excellent throughout the school, reflecting pupils' appreciation of their personal dignity and that of fellow pupils. Pupils benefit from the school culture of praise and celebration. They enjoy participating in the wide range of leadership opportunities and contributing to the evaluation of distinct elements of the school's mission. They are enthusiastic for the work of the chaplaincy and its role in school life, including promoting social justice. The number of pupil chaplaincy members is steadily growing. Pupils embrace the range of opportunities to serve the local community, for example, by providing Christmas hampers, while sixth form students actively support an orphanage in Thailand by fundraising for it and by raising funds to enable them to travel to work there. Pupils know that their teachers want the best for them. Individuals, some of whom may have experienced significant challenges while at school, remain in touch with their teachers after they have left school. Many parents commented in writing that their children were happy at school.

Staff value and support the mission of the school and its new mission statement 'Unlocking Belief in All'. The result of an extensive engagement with the whole school community, it is widely displayed throughout the school, as is the 'pupil profile', both of which are regularly referred to by staff in their engagements with pupils. Staff willingly participate in school activities which reflect the Catholic life and mission of the school, including staff prayer. A strong sense of community is a notable feature of the school with relations between and among pupils and staff characterised by courtesy and respect. It is promoted by the regular gatherings of the whole school, year, house groups and tutor groups for prayer and worship. The school environment reflects its mission with displays of religious artefacts, including a striking set of Stations of the Cross which was produced by a pupil and which line a corridor. Its mission is also evident in the curriculum, with departments identifying discrete opportunities for promoting spiritual and moral, social and cultural development. The centrality of chaplaincy provision is well evidenced by the newly refurbished school chapel. A key feature of the school's mission is its commitment to pastoral care. There are thoughtful and effective policies and practices that are sensitive to the local social conditions and support pupils to succeed and grow. This commitment requires particular support for those most disadvantaged and can involve the school working closely with local agencies and schools. The inspector also witnessed how the school is equally committed to staff welfare. Appropriate relationships and sex education is in place and being reviewed, along with that for personal, social and health education.

School leaders have a clear understanding of and commitment to the Church's mission in education as part of the diocese and thrive on the challenges this entails. Their vision of an integral education underpinned by Catholic beliefs and values is a source of inspiration for the school community. Rigorous monitoring and self-evaluation, including surveys from pupils and parents, contribute to a realistic appreciation of the Catholic life of the school and how it may be best developed. Regular professional development for staff includes exploring the vision so that staff may be able to embrace it. The importance given to working with parents and carers is reflected in the wide range of means by which the school engages with almost all of them, including those who might otherwise find working with school difficult, to the benefit of their children. Governors and directors are totally committed to the Catholic life of the school and provide appropriate support and challenge to the headteacher. They fully endorsed the support given to another diocesan school in line with their commitment to diocesan Catholic education.

Religious Education

Grade 1

Externally referenced data shows that overall students make outstanding progress at GCSE RS. In 2018 it is the highest for any core subject in the school and amongst the highest in Catholic schools nationally. School data shows that pupils make strong progress in all key stages and that this includes almost all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities. Lesson observations and a work scrutiny confirmed that pupils make excellent progress. They know the standard of their work and what they need to do to improve, particularly when studying exam courses. Students are becoming increasingly confident in understanding the new flightpath assessment measure in Key Stage 4. Behaviour in lessons is excellent because most pupils enjoy religious education and seek to further their learning. Almost all pupils are making age-appropriate progress in becoming religiously literate. They raise thoughtful questions and comments in class, such as exploring the concept of stewardship in the context of modern warfare in a Year 11 lesson, while groups of pupils engaged with the lead inspector on aspects of the Lord's Prayer. Behaviour is excellent because most pupils enjoy religious education and seek to further their learning. Attainment at GCSE RS has improved markedly since 2016 and has been higher than the national Catholic school attainment at GCSE grade C/4 for the past two years.

Teachers work collaboratively to plan engaging lessons for the pupils in their class. Accurate and comprehensive school data is used to fashion appropriate tasks and resources to enable pupils to further their learning. As a result much of the teaching is outstanding and teaching is never less than good. Teachers are well-qualified and have strong subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. They plan individual and collaborative tasks for pupils well and provoke reflection and clarification through appropriate questioning which can lead to stimulating exchanges of views and ideas. Monitoring of pupil progress is a feature, particularly good use of digital tablets being observed in a Year 12 lesson that allowed the teacher to observe each student's work in progress and to display examples of good practice to the whole class. In Key Stages 3 and 4 teachers follow school policy with regular assessments that include guidance on how to make further progress. Success is celebrated in a variety of ways: one parent was delighted to recount receiving a phone call with news of his child's particular achievement.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum is based on the *People of God* framework and includes Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. The GCSE RS specification is AQA specification B with Judaism as the second religion. These and the sixth form General Religious Education (6GRE) course meet the content requirements of the Bishops' Conference and direction of the diocesan bishop. 6GRE is taught by means of an assessed Extended Project Qualification which is externally assessed. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of pupils. For example, the *People of God* framework has been adapted to begin with Pilgrimage in Year 7 and so link with the Year 6 on Pilgrimage in the *Come and See* programme followed in Catholic primary schools. The weekly curriculum time devoted to religious education is 10% in Years 9-11 in line with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. In Years 7-8 timetabled religious education falls short of this requirement but well-planned and delivered discrete religious education days raise the overall provision to 10%. Similarly in the sixth form, curriculum time amounts to 5% in line with the Bishops' Conference requirements with similarly planned and executed days, which are well-attended, complementing the regular weekly provision. Outstanding pupil progress is the result of rigorous, well-planned self-evaluation by leaders, governors and directors encompassing thorough monitoring, searching analysis and insightful challenge that leads to well targeted initiatives which result in high standards of teaching and learning. Regular formative assessment in lessons and written work is complemented by at least four formal assessments annually that identify each pupil's standard of achievement, their learning goals and the steps to achieve them. Pupils are becoming increasingly confident in using the new flightpath method of assessment that has been introduced into Years 7-11.

Collective Worship

Grade 1

Acts of collective worship engage pupils' interest and prompt reflection and contemplation. Clergy spoke very positively of the demeanour and disposition of pupils when Mass for the whole school community is celebrated. This was apparent in form and year group collective worship during the inspection. The pupil members of the chaplaincy team are excellent role models who lead by example the planning and celebration of a range of collective worship. Drawn from many branches of school life, they have a thorough understanding of the liturgical year and of opportunities for prayer and worship in the life of the school. Inspired and encouraged by the school chaplain, they devise and lead worship that is both reverent and distinctive and speaks to the school community. Many pupils spoke positively of their recent chaplaincy team year group liturgies. Pupil involvement and initiative in tutor group prayer and worship are steadily increasing as pupils lead class prayer, which they or others may well have composed. Pupils are also keen to participate in larger celebrations, including Mass. The strong sense of community that is evident is clearly rooted in the manifest celebration of Catholic Christian faith through prayer and worship, in which all share, irrespective of personal belief. This was evident in Year 7 collective worship during the inspection when pupils clearly appreciated the link made with the pupil profile displayed throughout the school and the relevance of the statement attributed to St Irenaeus: 'the glory of God is man fully alive'.

Collective worship is at the heart of the life of the school and the focus of all school celebrations. Prayer and worship punctuate the daily, weekly, termly and annual cycles of school life. School mass is celebrated regularly during the year in the thoughtfully transformed sports hall to provide a reverential atmosphere that pupils respect and appreciate. In addition to regular form and house group Masses, a fortnightly lunchtime Mass is celebrated by local clergy in the recently refurbished and attractive school chapel. A relevant 'theme of the week' resource sheet and digital presentation based on the Sunday readings produced by the school chaplain is used by all who lead tutor and larger group collective worship each week. The liturgical year and celebrations of school liturgies are the foundation of the school calendar. Senior and middle leaders, including the chaplain, lead most occasions of school, year and house liturgical celebrations. They have an excellent understanding of the liturgical cycle and of how to devise and lead the celebrations in ways that engage the school community. They also support pupil members of the chaplaincy team when they devise and lead liturgies very effectively. Further, they also exploit opportunities to invite appropriate visitors whose contributions to praise and worship enhance the Catholic character of the school while securing a positive response from pupils.

School leaders have a thorough grasp of the Church's liturgical year, an excellent appreciation of the importance of prayer and worship in school life and an expert understanding of how it is best planned and celebrated in the school community. At the request of the Diocese of Northampton, they have recently supported another school to review and revivify its provision for prayer and worship. The school chaplain is a vital force in life of the school, her work animating and supporting prayer and worship throughout the school community. The chaplain inspires an enthusiastic student chaplaincy team who are committed to and successful in increasing pupil participation in devising, leading and participating in prayer and worship. Line-managed by the headteacher, the chaplain meets weekly with members of the senior leadership team to review prayer and worship. Pupils and staff contribute to the systematic monitoring and review of occasions of prayer and worship as part of the school's regular evaluation of collective worship. This is part of the ongoing school self-evaluation of the whole Catholic life of the school that is fully shared with school governors and reviewed annually by the Local Academy Committee. Well planned staff induction and regular professional development enable staff, irrespective of personal belief, to contribute to prayer and worship, including the leading of tutor and teaching group worship.

The inspectors would like to express their thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.