



## **INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

### **ST JOSEPH'S VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

Shaggy Calf Lane, Slough, SL2 5HW

DfE School No: 871/4800

URN: 110087

Head Teacher: Mr K Jones

Chair of Governors: Canon K O'Driscoll

Reporting Inspector: Mrs K Edwards

Associate Inspector: Mrs J Hoarty

**Date of Inspection: 17/18 September 2012**

Date Report Issued: 15 October 2012

Date of previous Inspection: February 2009

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and  
in partnership with Slough Local Authority

### **Information about the school**

St Joseph's Catholic High School is a smaller than average 11-18 voluntary-aided non-selective school. There are fifty members of teaching staff, twenty of whom are Catholic. Students are from a diverse mix of backgrounds; 78% are Catholic. Two thirds of the students are from minority ethnic groups and a high percentage of them speak English as an additional language with a significant proportion, thirty percent, speaking Polish. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs and at the 'School Action' stage of support is above the national average. Students with a statement for special educational needs or at 'School Action Plus' stage are lower in number than the national average. The school is currently being led by an executive headteacher and two co-headteachers.

### **Key grades for inspection**

1: Outstanding    2: Good    3: Satisfactory    4: Unsatisfactory

### **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

**Grade 2**

The overall effectiveness of the school is good. There is a real commitment to the care and wellbeing of pupils alongside the desire to improve academic performance and educate the whole child. There is a shared and coherent vision for the environment pupils need to thrive and this is well led by the current leadership team, head of RE and governors. The school is an inclusive community where all are valued and welcomed. Staff work tirelessly to provide opportunities for faith development and to build the self-esteem and confidence of their pupils. St Joseph's is well placed to make further improvement and development.

### **The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**Grade 2**

Since the last inspection the RE department has developed opportunities in their schemes of work for pupils to write independently in response to what they are learning. In some pupil work inspectors identified examples of helpful, formative marking and target setting but this is not consistent practice across the department.

There are good systems and processes in place to support self-evaluation in the school. The SEF-RE is detailed and gives an honest assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The inspectors agreed with the school's own judgements. The work of the RE department is monitored through lesson observation, performance management discussions, data and examination result analysis. In these processes the head of department is well supported by senior staff.

Leaders and managers have a clear vision for the catholic ethos of the school and for the role of the RE department in faith development and academic study of the subject. The mission statement is in place and clearly displayed around the school, though some pupils are unable to fully articulate it.

The current leadership team are well aware of the improvements the school needs to make, and have a clearly defined set of actions to achieve these.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Revisit the mission statement with the whole of the school community.
- Build on the school's high quality chaplaincy provision by appointing, inducting and supporting a full time chaplain.
- Use regular, diagnostic marking and feedback more consistently across the department. Ensure that all targets are based on 'next steps' are relevant for future pieces of work and reviewed.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

**Grade 2**

Pupils at St Joseph's actively participate in charity work and there are growing opportunities for sixth form students to take a leadership role in fundraising through the new house system. Pupils are aware that they belong to a strong community where they are loved and respected by staff and expected to treat each other in the same way. They are proud of their school and appreciate 'the extra mile' staff go for them.

Pupils respond in a reverent and prayerful way during liturgies, taking responsibility for leading and participating in worship. A particular strength of the collective worship of the school is the house assemblies where pupils reflect on how their house saint could be a role model for their lives. They pray confidently for their own individual intentions and responded to the recent death of a member of staff in a deeply spiritual way. Year 7 enjoy their day retreat with their tutor and find it a valuable opportunity to explore their faith and what it means to belong to a catholic community. Through pupil voice other year groups have requested further retreats. This is a mark of the value they place on these opportunities. Due to the evident appreciation of the opportunity to worship in a variety of ways, St Joseph's is fertile ground for further chaplaincy development.

Pupils' behaviour in religious education is good and they respond positively to the high expectations set by their teachers. They make good progress in lessons and demonstrate willingness and confidence in meeting the learning objectives set. They are able to volunteer ideas, listen attentively, reflect on what is said and show tolerance for views different from their own. They respond well to collaborative learning, demonstrating genuine support for their peers. An outstanding example of this was groups constructing model temples which were then peer assessed. It is clear that pupils have a high level of engagement in lessons marked by their curiosity and confidence in asking questions. They are flexible learners, able to adapt to a variety of tasks with good levels of perseverance and concentration.

At KS3, internal assessment and data tracking show that pupils make good progress. At KS4, whilst attainment exceeds the school target, there is a fluctuating trend and the RE results for 2012 are lower than results in English and Mathematics. Due to the current academic profile of the sixth form no student studies A level RE.

## **Leaders and managers**

**Grade 2**

Leaders and managers are highly visible in the school and act as role models for staff and pupils. They actively serve the staff and pupils in their care. They achieve a good balance between challenge and support and there have been recent helpful developments in monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning across the school. The leadership group ensure that staff are focused on the key issues that will lead to improved and sustained outcomes for pupils. One area requiring more attention and already identified by the team, is a closer monitoring and evaluation of the quality of tutor group prayer across the whole school.

One clear example of how monitoring and evaluation has led to improvement is the examination of progress in Year 7. It was recognised that pupils were not progressing quickly enough and assessment did not enable them to demonstrate what they could do. Changes to the type of assessment and increased opportunity to moderate and standardise marking are already addressing this. Currently the RE development plan is in an embryonic state and needs to be more tightly focused on how to achieve longer term priorities.

The governing body offers great support to the school. They are active participants in the life of the school and are extremely knowledgeable about the school community. Governors demonstrate great care for the wellbeing of staff and pupils as well as good leadership in raising important questions in the effective running of the school. They receive an annual report on chaplaincy provision. They are visible members of the community and take care to meet staff socially as well as professionally.

St Joseph's is a strong community, open and welcoming to all. There are many opportunities to reflect on what it means to be part of the Church and also the wider community. Pupils have knowledge, respect and tolerance for those of other faiths and are encouraged to share their own experiences within school. Recently pupils visited a local mosque and were guided in their visit by a former pupil. Another example of encouragement to appreciate beliefs of the wider community was homework where pupils were asked to interview an adult who goes to worship regularly, regardless of faith background. Pupils have opportunities to reflect on the needs of vulnerable members of the wider community through their charitable outreach work such as providing Christmas hampers for the elderly and St Joseph's link with a school in South Africa.

## **Provision**

## **Grade 2**

There are regular opportunities for staff and pupils to pray together. There are varied resources that can be used to support tutor group prayer. Displays in the school promote and enhance prayer and reflection and all pupils have a copy of traditional prayers in their planners. Collective worship is well organised, calm, reflective, motivational and relevant to the lives of the pupils. It is important to the staff that pupils participate actively where possible. Despite the absence of a school chaplain at present, the head of RE and other key members of staff make an outstanding contribution to chaplaincy provision in the school.

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good with outstanding features. Lessons are planned rigorously with clear objectives set and quality outcomes expected. These are communicated clearly with pupils and a variety of teaching and learning methods are employed to ensure that pupils make good progress. The assessment of pupils' understanding and progress in lessons is good, although this would be enhanced by more formal target setting and review during each half term to better demonstrate progress over time. Teachers ask effective questions and intervene to scaffold the learning. Relationships in the classroom are excellent and promote a secure and happy learning environment. Pupils' faith development is nurtured alongside academic progress.

Overall the curriculum meets Bishops' Conference requirements and is appropriate for the needs of all pupils. Provision for general RE is being developed and the head of RE has a strong and coherent vision for the programme that will be offered this year. The topics, resources and materials are well chosen, engaging and relevant.

The department is benefiting from the whole school data tracking system because this enables the head of department to identify underachievement quickly and implement effective intervention strategies as necessary. In classrooms, use is made of peer and self-assessment to good effect and praise is focused on learning objectives and outcomes being met. Half-termly assessments for all pupils show evidence of levelling and some target setting.

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