



INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC AND ANGLICAN HIGH SCHOOL YSGOL UWCHRADD GATHOLIC AC ANGLICANAIDD SANT JOSEFF

Sontley Road
Wrexham
LL31 7EN

Headteacher: Mrs. Maria Rimmer
Chair of Governors: Mrs. Justine Barlow
School Unique Number : 6654603

Inspectors: John Wilbraham and Christine Robinson

This Inspection has been carried out on behalf of the Bishop of Wrexham and the Bishop of St Asaph for Denominational Education under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECTION 50 INSPECTION.

The inspection of the school was carried out by two inspectors, appointed on behalf of the Diocese of Wrexham and the Diocese of St Asaph. The inspection followed the shared faith school inspection framework agreed by the two dioceses. The inspection considered the effectiveness of the school as a shared faith school and its requirements to its respective dioceses under the authority of the Bishop.¹ Consideration was given to the school's statutory requirements under Section 50 of the School's Inspections Act, 2005.

The inspectors drew on the school's own self-evaluation document. They observed the school's standards and outcomes, the provision, including prayer and collective worship and the leadership and management of the school. They looked at a range of evidence and key documentation. They visited lessons in religious education and held meetings with school leaders, governors, chaplains, staff and pupils.

The effectiveness of the school was judged against the progress made by the school since the last inspection, with consideration of three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors provide an overall judgment on the school's current standards against the framework and on its prospects for improvement.

The inspectors used a four-point scale and judgment.

What the judgment means:

Excellent

Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice

Good

Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement

Adequate

Strengths outweigh areas for improvement

Unsatisfactory

Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

¹ This Inspection complies with the canonical responsibilities for the purpose of the Bishop of Wrexham described in the Code of Canon Law. Book III: 804-806

THE INSPECTION REPORT.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

St Joseph's is a voluntary aided 11- 16, shared Catholic and Anglican high school in Wrexham. The school became a shared faith school in 2006, following an agreement made between the two dioceses. It has grown to be a popular and oversubscribed school. Families apply for a place at the school from a wide area and pupils currently on roll originate from over 50 primary schools.

The school's mission statement states that the school "strives to guide the whole school community to achieve their full potential, grow in their journey with God, and live a Christian life, which we will do in Christ's love, by the example of St Joseph, the Worker".

The school has 689 pupils on roll; approximately 60% of whom are baptised Catholic and with up to 40 % baptised Anglican (Church in Wales). Two pupils are looked after by the local authority, 58 pupils are on the SEN register, and 32 pupils have English as an additional language. 22% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, which is a high percentage compared with local authority and all-Wales average.

THE OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL.

St. Joseph's Catholic and Anglican High School is serving the community and its pupils with excellent provision, with leadership and management based upon a shared vision of the Christian Faith, which is embraced by both the Catholic and Anglican communities.

The Governing Body, Headteacher, leaders and managers work hard to translate the shared vision into a practical and successful educational provision for all its pupils. This is evident in the provision made in and beyond the classroom, in teaching and learning, in the support for those who need it and in developing opportunities for prayer and worship. Academic performance within curricular religious education is characterised by successful GCSE results and clear student engagement. Chaplaincy provision makes a very significant contribution to the school's success in implementing its aims. A high level of parental satisfaction was evidenced in questionnaires and endorsed during their meetings with inspectors.

The school has the drive and ambition to refine and develop its vision and to provide excellence in its mission for the whole community.

HOW GOOD ARE OUTCOMES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS OF PUPILS?

How well pupils achieve and enjoy learning in religious education.

Pupils achieve well in religious education, as evidenced by the high performance at GCSE. This level of achievement includes a very significant narrowing of the gap between boys and girls performance in terms of A*-C at GCSE, where a 24% advantage in favour of the girls has now been reduced to 8%. The vast majority of pupils in a year group are entered, with a small cohort following a more appropriate short course. Over three years the pattern at GCSE shows a steady rise in attainment, well above the high level target (D) set in the FFT targets (shown in brackets):

2011 A*-C 85% (FFT. 63%), 2012 A*-C 69% (FFT 58%), 2013 A*-C 80% (FFT 68%)

The strong 'value added' performance is repeated at grades A* - A, and this is further endorsed by Edexcel's comparative analysis of results and the school's subject residuals. The school needs a more consistent system for collecting data at transition from key stage 2 to 3 to give a baseline assessment from the Catholic and Anglican primary schools. However, pupil progress at key stage 3 is evident in pupils of all abilities, placing them in a strong position to make a well-equipped transition to GCSE. This is achieved by good systems of support and a well-structured and well-delivered curriculum which provides challenge, variety, early introduction to GCSE-style analysis and writing.

Pupils engage well with the subject, their teachers and each other, indicating very positive attitudes and very good understanding and appreciation of the shared-faith basis of the school. They learn to broaden this appreciation by studying aspects of other world religions at key stage 3 while also deepening their understanding of Christianity through a structured study of Mark's Gospel within the GCSE course. This enables the pupils to become religiously literate and to reflect spiritually, theologically and ethically. This is all integral to their broader experiences of life in school and in the wider community.

To what extent do the pupils benefit from and contribute to the Christian life of the school?

The Christian life of the school is inspirational.

There is a quiet reverence which is felt throughout the school, and a calmness and evident respect. This has been achieved through a secure mission statement, lived out in the faith community. Policies and school documentation reflect the school's Gospel values and these are fully embedded in school life giving it meaning and focus. Pupils benefit greatly from belonging to a faith-based school and they show a sincere respect through their contribution to the quality of their education. The commitment of the pupils shown in the life of the school is outstanding. Their voice is heard and every student is respected.

The area created as a chapel allows a sacred space that is available for the whole school community to access. Here there is a quiet reverence, a time away from the action of the school, a place with a profound sense of devotion and security. The three part-time chaplains provide an important and unique role. They have dedicated themselves to the faith life of the school and make themselves available at all times of the school day, and beyond, to support and listen to the students with a quiet sincerity and concern. Here is a space where students can quietly pray, reflect and participate in services. They can be guided in ways of expressing their faith. The chaplains' dedication to the spiritual life of the school gives quality and security to pupils and staff. Their commitment through their concern and perceptiveness is a rare asset to a school. The humility of the Chaplaincy team, their involvement with the planning of prayer and worship and their inclusion of pupils in this planning and evaluation is an outstanding strength of the quality of worship. Pupils are also offered opportunities to participate in worship in the chapel as well as at whole-school celebrations, marking events through the Christian year.

Pupils have a broad-based faith and understand the meaning of mission. Each class takes on responsibility for planning, developing and sustaining charity work, showing awareness of their responsibility as local and global citizens. The success of this aspect is evident through publicity around the school as well as being reported in the weekly Gazette.

The Eco Group, with pupils from across the whole school, is aware and pupils are developing their knowledge and commitment, with campaigns in school and the wider environment. They lead the way by raising issues and involving the whole school community, including parents, encouraging participation. The ideas they have are perceptive, showing an interest in relevant issues and a willingness to listen and debate. The whole school commitment is secure and Healthy School Awards have been gained. Here again there is an established and progressing programme.

Younger pupils are allocated older students as peer mentors through a clear and successful programme. The senior pupils respond well when given this responsibility.

How well do pupils respond to and participate in the school's prayer and collective worship?

Worship is an integral part of the school day. Tutors support pupils with the planning and delivery of prayer and as valued time, which may also be wholly pupil-initiated. Collective Worship for a full year group is held in the 'Social Court' and there are opportunities for this to be student-led. There are many opportunities to link worship to events such as retreats, charity work, eco matters, local and world issues, and the development and understanding of Welsh culture. Here a prayerful and calm atmosphere has been created. The pupils understand and respect this space. The whole school gathers to celebrate some major Christian festivals and the school celebrates Mass and Eucharist. The pupils respect worship and prayer as part of each school day and they are deeply committed to this aspect of school life, recognising the importance of it to them as individuals and as a school community.

The evaluation system for collective worship further involves the staff and pupils in seeking ways to lead planning and implementation forward.

Opportunities provided by the school for retreats, pilgrimages and visits linked to the religious education curriculum are enthusiastically taken up by the pupils. These visits support pupils in their faith and these are valued by students.

Each classroom reflects the faith of the school through a focus display on the school prayer, a thought-provoking poster and a cross or crucifix. There are also posters around school with further thought-provoking questions and statements. Pupils are aware and respond positively to these. The chaplains help the pupils to express their thoughts and reflections through posters and displays that pupils create. Their contribution is deeply rooted in their faith.

Opportunities to visit other faith centres, including various Cathedrals, have been established. Residential retreats are valued and opportunities for pilgrimages, including visits to Lourdes and Taizé, have made a significant impact on the pupils' faith lives.

Judgement: Excellent

HOW GOOD IS PROVISION?

The quality of teaching and learning / students' needs

The overall standards of teaching and learning are excellent. Teaching is well prepared and informed, and this holds the interest of the pupils. The pupils' responses and behaviour are very good and there is clear evidence of progress at all levels. Some techniques for asking questions can be used more and some independent learning can be extended. Assessment, marking, diagnosis and intervention strategies are all increasingly consistent and effective and pupils are aware of their targets and what they need to do to achieve or exceed them.

The school provides a welcoming and pleasant working environment with all classrooms, including those for religious education and the chapel area, providing stimulating and celebratory displays including pupils' work, literacy and key words (often bi-lingually) and reminders of the Gospel values which drive the school. Pupils present their work with pride. Good use is made of teaching assistants, mentors and chaplains in an effective integration of academic and pastoral provision which is reinforced by the use of prayer and reflection as a component of religious education.

The quality of prayer and collective worship

The school clearly ensures that the legal requirement for the daily act of collective worship for every pupil is met. The worship is celebrated meaningfully through Catholic and Anglican traditions and practice. Each day begins with class or a year group service. Where pupils lead worship there is respect shown by other pupils with appropriate staff support.

The quality of prayer and collective worship and planning is outstanding. This is yet another example of the thought and care that has been given for the benefit of the whole school and wider community. The classrooms have reflective spaces and reflection areas are also found around the school through thought-provoking displays. The chapel, as already mentioned, is at the heart of the school where the chaplains' dedication is exemplary.

Judgement: Excellent

HOW GOOD ARE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT?

How well does the governing body promote the strategic development of the Christian life of the school and curriculum religious Education?

The Governors at St Joseph's school work conscientiously and effectively. They are well organised, keen to improve their procedures and have an established rigorous system in place for monitoring as well as for improvement. They understand the need to plan and to prioritise. They, alongside the school's senior leaders, are keen to realise the school's vision and they work together for the well-being of the pupils. The two diocesan directors offer support and challenge to the school in many ways one being through attending the governors' meetings. Governor working groups have focused areas for development which are consistently reviewed. Their commitment to the well-being of the pupils and the Christian life of the school is exemplary.

How successfully do the Governing Body, leaders and managers promote a holistic vision of education that is rooted in the Christian mission of the Church?

The Christian mission is at the heart of this school.

Governors and managers, who continually keep in touch with parents and carers, have the school at the centre of planning and implementation; they are rooted in the school's mission statement.

The school's Christian vision means that the school's leadership is focused and promotes the Christian life of the school, providing meaningful experiences and opportunities for students.

The commitment of the Governors to paying a 'Living Wage' is commendable, exemplifying their dedication to the school mission statement. The headteacher's report is an aid to helping them identify the way ahead alongside a commitment to support vulnerable children. The Christian commitment is clear and strong.

The Governors are certainly working with the school's leadership and management to promote this faith school. The senior leaders among the teaching staff show great dedication and commitment.

How well do leaders and managers promote, monitor, evaluate and review provision for the Christian life of the school and plan for improvement to outcomes for the students?

Here again the school staff show great dedication. Leaders have a robust form of planning with a clear path forward as is shown in their self-evaluation. Staff monitor progress, and monitoring is visionary with staff working well together to enable the school life to be securely embedded in the Christian vision. The success is evident through not only the paperwork but is shining through when talking to all staff and pupils.

Staff respect the pupils and in turn the pupils respect the staff. The behaviour of pupils observed during lessons and worship was outstanding.

How well do leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education and plan for improvement to outcomes for the students?

The head of religious education, with the headteacher and supported by the leadership team, provides excellent leadership and management and this drives the department forward successfully. Standards, targets, progress and individual pupil needs are promoted, evaluated and monitored effectively, with rigour, mutual support and teamwork. Very good use is made of the school and the department's Improvement Plan, and the Self-Evaluation Report is an accurate and comprehensive tool.

There is a palpable determination to improve continually and to give every pupil their full learning entitlement. The Headteacher provides exceptional vision, energy and support.

How effectively do leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote learning and pupil well-being?

Effective partnerships are developed with various providers, including the two diocesan services, retreat centres, local parishes and churches, St Giles' Centre, Wrexham, charitable organisations, the Catholic Association of Teachers, Schools and Colleges, and local primary schools. The school seeks to broaden the involvement of churches and leaders from the community. Parental support and satisfaction are high, as evidenced by the pre-inspection questionnaires and the parental meeting with inspectors.

How effectively do leaders and managers promote inclusion, community cohesion and the common good?

The school certainly embraces and celebrates the rich diversity among pupils from different backgrounds.

The school works alongside external agencies and this is a real strength of the school. St Joseph's is proactive in leading and promoting ways forward. The matrix they have developed to support vulnerable children is another example of the dedication that staff and governors have to support all pupils.

Leaders are concerned to give the pupils quality support both academically and socially. This is achieved through rigorous pupil support systems. These are developed alongside the self-evaluation, which is continually reviewed.

Judgement: Excellent

4. WHAT ARE THE SCHOOL'S PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT?

The Headteacher, the governors, members of the religious education department, chaplains and other leaders and staff, have set in place the structures and strategies to ensure continuous improvement and the realisation of a unique vision.

Judgement: Excellent

The inspectors name the three following recommendations to assist the school's continuous improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. Further develop techniques of questioning and answering in lessons, along with strategies for enhancing independent learning, to ensure that there is appropriate challenge for the more able and talented pupils.**
- R2. Work in partnership with the two dioceses to develop a more effective and consistent system for performance data at transition from key stage 2 to 3, to enable clearer baseline assessment in the Catholic and Anglican primary schools.**
- R3. Continue to broaden the involvement of churches and their leaders from the community served by the school to raise awareness of what the school provides for those seeking a faith-based education.**

The school is required to submit an action plan in response to these recommendations within 6 weeks of receiving the final inspection report. The school is asked to supply evidence of 'sector leading practice' within the same time scale at the request of the two dioceses.

The Church School Inspectors would like to thank the governors, head teacher, all staff and pupils for their cooperation before and during the Inspection.