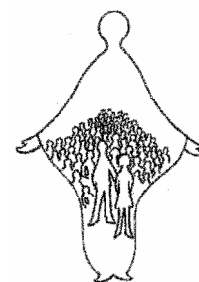


**SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. JOSEPH'S ROMAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL and
SPORTS COLLEGE**

Horwich, Bolton

Inspection date March 2007

Reporting Inspector Mr. W. Ryan

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-16
Number on roll	875
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Fr. H. Jones
Headteacher	Mr. L. Conley
Head of Religious Education	Mrs. J. Stevenson
Date of previous inspection	November 2001.

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school	1	
The quality of Collective Worship	1	
Achievement and standards in Religious Education	1	
The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education	2	
The quality of the Religious Education curriculum	1	
Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education	1	
<i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i>		

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Joseph's is a voluntary aided co-educational high school for pupils aged 11-16. It serves the contributory parishes of St. Mary (Horwich), Sacred Heart (Westhoughton), Our Lady (Aspull), Holy Family (New Springs) and St. Joseph (Anderton) which is in the Archdiocese of Liverpool. Learners attending the school come from the Local Authorities of Bolton, Wigan and Lancashire. Many are "bussed" into school and come from a range of social and economic backgrounds. The school is over-subscribed and the indicative admission number has risen to 171. There are currently 875 learners on roll of whom 853 are baptised Catholics. This is 97.5% of the student population. None of the learners has been withdrawn from collective worship or curriculum Religious Education. 4.9% of learners are eligible for free school meals. The number of learners identified as having special educational needs is 126 and of these 21 have a statutory statement of special educational need. There are 37 Catholic teachers representing 69% of the total teaching staff.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Joseph's is an outstanding Catholic school. The school Mission Statement, which is kept constantly under review, is the starting point for all initiatives and policies. It is prominently displayed throughout the buildings and all stakeholders share in its ownership. Governors fulfil their role as critical friends with enthusiasm in supporting and monitoring the development of the school as a Catholic community. The chair and vice-chair, who is the link governor for Religious Education, in particular maintain a very close association with the school. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership in all aspects of school life, leading an experienced and dedicated senior management team which supports middle managers in raising standards whilst making a significant impact on enriching the spiritual lives of the learners. Collective worship is a major strength of the school, not only for the rich variety evident in its provision but also in the importance attributed to it by all sections of the school community. The school has recently taken measures to further develop the use of music and drama in worship. The learners contribute in no small way through the respect they show for their faith and by the manner in which they celebrate it. The Religious Education department maintains the highest standards in terms of academic progress and delivers a programme of studies that, in addition to achieving academic success that is well above the national average, also provides learners with experiences that help them to develop both morally and spiritually. Leadership of the department is outstanding. Lessons are well planned, delivered and assessed by an experienced and skilled team of teachers. The department would benefit from additional information communication technology facilities. Learners feel secure and valued. They recognise that every effort is made to fulfil the Mission to, "develop our potential, celebrate our talents and go forward together in faith". Learners are happy in school and good relationships with teachers and among themselves enhance its sense of community. Ample opportunities exist for learners to take on responsibilities not only within the school itself but also in the wider community through the work of its St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Amnesty International group and through links with its partner school in South Africa through the Ubungani project. Generous donations are made to a number of charities.

Improvement since the last inspection

There were no key issues at the last inspection. However following the inspection a prayer room was created which is now a well used resource for both the Religious Education department and other members of the school community. Curriculum time for Religious Education in Key Stage 4 has been increased from 10% to 12%. A prayer file has been provided for use by form tutors at registration time.

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to evaluate itself and make further improvement is good. Leadership is committed to continue the drive to raise standards of achievement and progress is being made. Monitoring arrangements in all areas of school life are robust.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to develop the use of music and drama to enrich the liturgical life of the school.
- Increase information communication technology facilities to allow easier access to, and encourage greater use by all members of the Religious Education department.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The school describes the leadership and management of its Catholic life as good. The inspector deems it to be outstanding. The school Mission statement is the foundation on which its structures, policies and practices are built. It is kept constantly under review and forms the basis for much of the staff in-service training in relation to the Catholic nature of the school. It features prominently in school documentation, is prominently displayed in all classrooms and, most importantly, is owned by the entire school community. The governing body fulfils its role of critical friend well. The chair leads with enthusiasm and energy. He keeps himself informed through weekly meetings with the headteacher and devotes considerable time and effort to serving the spiritual needs of the community. In this he is ably assisted by the vice-chair whose commitment to the school is exemplary, spending three days per week in school in his roles of counsellor to staff and pupils and as link governor to the Religious Education department. The headteacher is an outstanding leader, whose influence and dedication drives the school forward both academically and spiritually. In this he enjoys the support of a committed and very industrious senior management team which leads by example. The Catholic ethos which permeates the school is the foundation for its excellent pastoral care and the involvement of form tutors in implementing aspects of the community's prayer life ensures that all staff play a part in its delivery. Assemblies are planned and recorded and the Religious Education department provides support materials for those involved in leading them.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The school considers the quality of collective worship to be outstanding. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that this judgement is accurate. Major liturgical events in the Church Year are celebrated appropriately by the school community. These include Advent liturgies, carol services, distribution of ashes, Lenten liturgies, Easter celebrations and the observation of Holy Days of Obligation. In addition liturgies take place to mark the start of the new school year, to welcome Year 7 pupils and their parents to the school, to start the Year 6 induction day. A leavers' liturgy is celebrated for students moving on to the next stage of their education. Assemblies take place daily, one of which is a whole school event. These are planned and recorded with input from the Religious Education and the Performing Arts departments. Two assemblies observed during the inspection were of the highest order and serve to illustrate the importance that the leadership of the school attaches to its Catholic ethos. The reverence displayed by learners and their participation in vocal and meditative prayer is highly commendable. Those not involved at an assembly pray with their form tutors who are provided with prayer files to encourage and support class prayer. The School Mission Team, strengthened by the recent appointment of a head of Performing Arts, plans and develops liturgies that are prayerful and also appealing to the participants for whom they are designed. The school chapel is a well resourced. Weekly voluntary Mass is celebrated here as well as recitation of the Rosary in October and Stations of the Cross in Lent. It is used as a valuable resource by the Religious Education department and is a place of quiet and prayer for learners. All learners have the opportunity to reflect and pray on retreat either in school or at retreat centres. The school has a thriving St. Vincent de Paul Society and an articulate Amnesty International Group.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school considers achievement and standards in Religious Education to be good. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that they are outstanding. Standards in the department are high and continue to rise. Excellent planning, review of syllabus material and robust assessment arrangements all contribute to maintaining progress. On entry pupil achievement is above the national average. Good progress is made in Key Stage 3 while attainment in Key Stage 4 is well above the national average in Religious Education and indeed above the school average in other subject areas. Learners exhibit very good knowledge of Religious Education. Key words are part of their vocabulary and they demonstrate a mature ability to debate relevant religious and moral issues in both Key Stages. Learners enjoy their work and they also value the subject and recognise its importance to the school. Excellent behaviour and a willingness to engage in lessons enrich the learning experience for all learners. Case studies of Amnesty International, Kick Racism out of Football campaign, pilgrimage and human rights form part of the Key Stage 3 programmes of study and lead the learners to a practical application to their faith and learning. Class prayer files and use of the school chapel are valuable and well used departmental resources. Learners play their part in school through membership of the school council, as peer mediators to younger learners and as fundraisers for a variety of charities, locally, nationally and internationally.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school assesses the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education to be good. The inspector concurs. The Religious Education department is staffed by well qualified, skilled and experienced practitioners, who are not only teachers but also role models for the learners in terms of their personal commitment in leading and promoting the school's Catholic ethos. Teaching observed was at least good with excellent classroom management and well planned lessons. Good planning ensures sound delivery of the curriculum while a variety of teaching styles broadens the appeal of the subject. Planned improvements in the department's information communications technology should raise its already very high standards. Regular workshops take place to monitor both the content and delivery of the curriculum and sound assessment procedures are in place to inform planning and direct target setting. Learners have a part to play in assessing their own work and setting themselves future targets. Coupled with the school tracking system this will improve communication with parents. Learners enjoy their work and take pride in it. Some of the project work seen in Key Stage 3 was very well researched and produced. Learners show great respect for their teachers and this contributes in no small way to their learning. They work well together and respect each other's efforts. They are encouraged to make progress and are rewarded through the school reward system for both endeavour and achievement.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The inspector considers the quality of the Religious Education curriculum to be outstanding. The school's judgement is that they are good. At Key Stage 3 the diocesan guidelines are well established and resource materials have been collated to support the delivery of the curriculum. The syllabus is kept constantly under review both at departmental meetings and workshops. It is tailored to the needs of the learners at both key stages and recent changes to this in Key stage 4 have resulted in improved examination results. Learners with special educational needs are well supported by teaching assistants and development of work suited to their needs. The co-ordinator for Special Educational Needs is the link with Religious Education as she teaches in the department. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by the rich provision of retreats at Savio House in Bollington and at Castlerigg Manor in Keswick. All year groups are offered opportunities for personal prayer and reflection. Opportunities for prayer and celebration are offered to learners through the use of the chapel for both private and public prayer. The Religious Education department is allocated 10% of curriculum time in Key Stage 3 while this rises to 12% in Key Stage 4.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspector considers the leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education to be outstanding. The school believes them to be good. The head of department is a well organised, dedicated, experienced and skilful teacher who enjoys the confidence and support of the governing body and the headteacher. Record keeping and assessment are well established and through workshops and departmental meetings resources are improved and adapted. Members of the department are instrumental in supporting, delivering and enriching the quality of the school's spiritual provision. The headteacher monitors the work of the department and also undertakes a teaching role in the department. At governor level the vice-chair is the link with the Religious Education department and plays a prominent part in school life, not only as a counsellor but also as a participant at retreats and liturgies. Rooming arrangements are satisfactory in terms of number and location. However there is a need to make better information communication technology provision. Display is bright, well presented and relevant. Annual expenditure allocated for the department is at least adequate and compares favourably with other major departments. Additional funding for liturgies, retreats and in service training is generous and is a further indication of the importance governors and leaders attach to the schools Catholic ethos.