

**INSPECTION REPORT**

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

**Chorley New Road Horwich Bolton BL6 6HW**

Inspection date April 2010

Reporting Inspector Anthony Pearson

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

Type of School Catholic Secondary

URN 105262

Age range of pupils 11-16

Number on roll 890

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair of Governors Rev. Fr. H. Jones

Headteacher Mr. Leo Conley

Head of Religious Education Mrs. Julie Stevenson

Date of previous inspection March 2007

<b>The Inspection judgements are:</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Explanation of the Grades</b>  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	1	
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 high school for boys and girls aged 11-16. It is a specialist school for sport. St. Joseph's serves the 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. The school is slightly smaller than average with 890 pupils on roll of whom 842 (95%) are baptised Catholics. The indicative admissions number is 171. The number of pupils with special educational needs is 160 which is below average. The number of pupils having a statutory statement of special educational need is 18 which is broadly average. 8% of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals which is below average. A small but recently increasing proportion of pupils is from ethnic minority backgrounds. The school serves a wide geographical area of relative affluence in and beyond the small thriving industrial town of Horwich but pupils represent the full range of socio-economic backgrounds. 34 of the school's 59 teachers (58%) are Catholics.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

St. Joseph's is an outstanding Catholic school. The headteacher, very well supported by governors, managers and leaders throughout the school, continues to ensure that the St. Joseph's long established and well-recognised strengths based upon key Gospel values are maintained and continue to develop as the school responds to new challenges. The vision and ethos stemming from a Mission Statement to which all stakeholders, including the school's pupils, have contributed is strongly evident in the daily life of the school, not least in the mutual respect which characterises all relationships. Pupils' motivation to respond to the needs of others less fortunate than themselves is realised through impressive involvement in a wide range of charitable activity including some extensive personal commitment to the school's St Vincent de Paul Conference and Justice and Peace group. Pupils are keen to be involved in the opportunities which the school provides for them to develop and display their leadership skills. Collective worship is outstanding enhanced, by excellent contributions from music and drama and prayer, and is seen as a natural part of the everyday life of the school. Excellent leadership of curriculum Religious Education maintains a track record of high attainment and outstanding achievement. At the same time it ensures that the subject plays its part, within the strongly Catholic ethos which prevails in the school, in ensuring that pupils' spiritual and moral development is equally impressive. This highly inclusive school also contributes effectively to the cohesion of its local community and provides opportunities for its pupils to have first hand experience of other young people in Europe and beyond whose life experiences are very different from their own.

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

Following the last Section 48 inspection in March 2007 the school has very successfully developed the use of music and drama to enhance and enrich the quality of its liturgical life and has supported the Religious Education department in extending its use of information technology in order to improve the quality of learning experiences for pupils.

### **Capacity to improve**

The school's self-evaluation is accurate other than in the case of its assessment of the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education which is cautiously modest. Nevertheless the overall high quality of self evaluation and the way that it is used to inform development planning together with a very strong track record of pupil achievement and personal development indicates that there is an excellent capacity to improve even further

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

- Investigate ways of providing the school with a chaplain.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL**

The inspection evidence endorses the school's own view that leadership and management of its Catholic life is outstanding. All members of the school community recognise the way in which the headteacher leads by example in ensuring that its Mission Statement becomes a reality of its everyday life, ably supported by leaders at all levels including the senior pupils. This is well exemplified in the way that a commitment to care, fairness and respect are strongly evident and seen to underpin relationships throughout the school. Governors are highly supportive and prepared to challenge where necessary. The vice-chair has a regular, active and much appreciated presence around the school. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that both time and finance are made available to support and sustain the Catholic life of the school through in-service training and the provision of resources. The school has an impressive well-used chapel and governors are currently committing resources to adapt a neighbouring redundant chapel of ease for the school's use. Pupils' contribution to the school and wider community is outstanding, for example through significant commitment to charitable activity through the work of the thriving and highly effective SVP Conference or through involvement in the school's Justice and Peace group. There are well-established and productive links with schools abroad which broaden pupils' horizons by providing insight into life experiences very different from their own. The school is quick to recognise and respond to new challenges. Pupils joining the school from other parts of Europe and beyond appreciate the way that the "Welcome Club" has helped them settle and get the most from their new environment. Links with parishes, which include contributions to some of their liturgical events, are strong.

### **THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

The school rightly judges that collective worship is outstanding. The quality of worship is underpinned by careful planning of the overall programme as well as individual assemblies and liturgies. Holy Days, seasonal feasts and important occasions during the academic year are marked by the celebration of Mass and appropriate liturgies. Pupils are involved in both planning and preparation of these occasions but the major burden, in a school which does not have the services of a permanent chaplain, is willingly and generously taken up by the subject leader for Religious Education and other colleagues. Provision for a school chaplain would enhance the provision. There is a well-constructed programme for the daily prayer which takes place in form time which is supported by effective induction arrangements for teachers new to the school, including those who are not Catholics. Since the previous inspection, largely through the enthusiastic contribution of the Performing Arts department, there has been a marked improvement in the level and quality of music and drama in liturgies and assemblies which has further enhanced their spiritual impact on pupils. Two assemblies observed during the inspection were excellent in their own way. Both appeared to have a strong impact on the pupils present not least because the themes were very effectively made relevant to their real lives. A whole school assembly was notable because of the excellent use of information technology and the wholehearted commitment of the majority of pupils to the rousing hymns which were accompanied by excellent musical backing. Prayer runs like a thread through the life of the school. Concern for a recently bereaved colleague was first observed in prayers offered in a staff briefing and later echoed in prayer in assemblies and at the beginning of lessons.

### **ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Taking into account pupils' examination performance in Religious Studies, the progress they make in relation to their starting points on entry to the school and their exemplary spiritual and moral development the evidence clearly supports the school's belief that overall standards and achievement in Religious Education are outstanding. All pupils are entered for the GCSE in Religious Studies. Over time results are consistently high in comparison with the national picture in the ranges A\*-A and A\*-C. As in most schools girls tend to outperform boys in this subject. The vast majority of pupils, including those who have special educational needs, reach the challenging targets which the school sets for them. Pupils' achievement in Religious Studies is better than in other core subjects. Careful monitoring of progress towards challenging targets, set on entry to the school, ensures that progress from Years 7 to 9 is also rapid and prepares pupils well for the subsequent demands of their examination courses. Pupils report that they enjoy Religious Education lessons, a view also endorsed by the parents. Astute curriculum planning, carefully focussed teaching and the very strong tangible Catholic ethos which permeates the school all contribute to pupils' outstanding spiritual moral social and cultural development and motivate substantial numbers to play an active role their school community.

## **THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The inspection evidence indicates that the overall quality of teaching and learning in Religious education is outstanding. The school is overly modest in its own judgement that it is good. Almost all lessons observed during the inspection were good or outstanding. The quality of classroom relationships is a significant factor in the progress made in lessons and the quality of the learning experience. Pupils themselves recognise and appreciate this strength in their learning in Religious Education which motivates them to try hard. Lessons are generally well planned to meet the needs of different groups within the class and now, since the previous inspection, often make good use of information technology to present interesting and stimulating resources. Questioning is used effectively, and where appropriate at length, to challenge pupils' thinking and extend their understanding. The learning is made relevant to the pupils' own life experiences which again acts as a powerful motivation to be fully involved in the wide variety of leaning activities which the teachers provide. Marking is regular and supportive and shows pupils what they need to do to improve further. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored so that appropriate interventions can be made where necessary. Teaching assistants are well briefed and help ensure that pupils who have special educational needs make the same rates of progress as other pupils.

## **THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM**

The school judges its Religious education curriculum to be outstanding and the inspection evidence endorses this. The curriculum meets diocesan and national requirements in its content and the proportion of curriculum time allocated to it. There has been a proactive response to recent amendments to some elements of the diocesan programmes of study for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Curriculum arrangements are carefully monitored so that all groups of pupils, for example those in Years 10 and 11 who receive part of their education off-site, continue to receive their full entitlement to Religious Education and so achieve appropriately. Optional programmes of study in Years 10 and 11 are very carefully selected to make them relevant to pupils' lives and to reflect local and national circumstances. Consequently the curriculum provided for pupils in St. Joseph's contributes in no small way to their outstanding academic achievement and spiritual and moral development. The very positive impact of the taught curriculum is considerably enhanced by a broad range of features provided by the school which also contribute to pupils understanding of their faith and to their spiritual, moral social and cultural development. These include participation by the vast majority of pupils in an excellent programme of residential retreat experiences, opportunities to be involved in Catholic action through involvement in the school's SVP and Justice and Peace groups, together with awareness of and involvement of pupils in the school's Fair Trade activities. The chapel is used effectively to enhance learning experiences of groups of pupils as well as provide opportunities for private reflection and prayer. Pupils take advantage of this, for example to make their own written petitions. The curriculum is also enhanced by making the most of opportunities provided through the school's Sports College status.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Inspection evidence confirms the school's own view that leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education is outstanding. The subject leader has created a strong cohesive departmental team many of whom have senior leadership roles in other areas of the life of the school. Their experience is used well to enhance the work of the department. Roles and responsibilities are clear and there is a strongly shared commitment to the vision expressed in the school's Mission Statement evident in all aspects of the department's work. Effective action taken after the previous inspection including improvements to, and training in, the use of information technology has contributed to overall better quality provision in Religious Education. Monitoring procedures are effective and the information gained is used to good effect in development planning. Self-evaluation is accurate though the subject leader is overly modest in describing her own contributions. Line management is strong and there is a regular and productive link with governors. The subject leader also makes a strong contribution to the Catholic life of the school in general through a key role in planning and contributing to school's programme of liturgies. The department has recent effective experience of training new teachers of Religious Education through its involvement in the Graduate Teacher programme. Funding is generous and although some classrooms used for the teaching of Religious Education are at some distance from the subject base, good management effectively minimises any potentially negative impact.