

# DIOCESE OF LEEDS



## DIOCESAN BOARD FOR INSPECTIONS

# SECTION 48 FINAL REPORT

### THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

St. John's Catholic School for the Deaf  
Church Street, Boston Spa, LS23 6DF

School URN	108120
School DfE Number	3837016
E-mail address	abradbury@bostonspa.org.uk
Chair of Governors	Mr. K. Rigby
Headteacher	Mrs. Ann Bradbury
RE Subject Leader	Mrs. Michelle Conway
Date of Inspection	30 May 2012
Section 48 Inspector	Annette Dews & Marie McClelland

## INTRODUCTION

The Inspection of St John's Catholic School for the Deaf was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Leeds Diocesan Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Bishop of Leeds. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors (2010).

The inspectors attended primary and secondary class-based Collective Worship (CW) sessions, observed four Religious Education (RE) lessons, accessed video recordings, visited classrooms and other areas to discuss and view samples of RE work across the full age range. Discussions were held with school staff, care staff, parents, pupils, the Chaplain and a governor. A range of evidence was seen including: the RE subject leader's files covering planning, assessment, and individual pupil progress records; the *School Development Plan*, the *RE Development Plan*, minutes of Governing Body Committees, safeguarding records, whole school CW files, feedback from staff and pupil surveys and several written communications to and from parents, in-house resource materials, plus folders of annotated photographic evidence of special projects and themed work since the last inspection.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. John's Catholic School for the Deaf is an oral, all age, non-maintained, day and residential special school located in the village of Boston Spa, near Wetherby. It has a national catchment area with pupils currently from 31 local authorities and a wide range of social, cultural and economic backgrounds. All pupils have a hearing impairment and the vast majority have additional needs including multi-sensory impairments, learning difficulties, autism, visual impairments, physical disabilities, emotional and behaviour difficulties and other complex needs. Many join the school at the beginning of their secondary career but admissions can be at any age and at any time in the school year. 18% of the current population of 78 pupils is Catholics and 46% are from other Christian denominations. 23% are eligible for FSM, two thirds are weekly boarders. The school currently caters for pupils from Year 1 to Year 14.

Very few teaching staff changes have occurred but some staff have undertaken new leadership roles since the last inspection. The RE department is led by an experienced qualified teacher of the deaf and a newly qualified RE specialist is in post since September 2011.

St John's is part of a collaborative partnership with 21 other schools in East Leeds (Elmete Partnership of Schools). Following an educational visit to a young offenders' institute, a drama production on crime and punishment devised by St John's pupils won a national award for an outstanding community project.

## INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection Grades: 1 is Outstanding, 2 is Good, 3 is Satisfactory, 4 is Inadequate

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

1

This is a summative judgement based on the 2 judgements below: Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils, provision for Catholic education (includes effectiveness of leaders and managers) and capacity for sustained improvement.

### OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS, PROVISION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

1

### CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT

1

### Main findings

Guided by its Mission Statement 'Working together to communicate, learn, enjoy and achieve', St John's is an outstanding Catholic school. It is a welcoming place where children are loved and respected in an environment where in the words of a pupil 'every voice *is* really heard and celebrated' and there is a palpable culture of openness to change and challenge. The very strong working relationships between residential and school staff and the effective links between school and parents provide a safe and caring scaffold for pupils; this is reflected in their confident sense of belonging and in their openness to discussing their own disabilities, challenges and achievements. The Catholic life of the school is rich and varied and contributes to the spiritual development of pupils. RE staff share ideas and expertise to plan and resource innovative lessons and coursework and this promotes a continuity of standards. Classrooms and shared resource areas are well organised and technology enrichment is embedded as a norm. Behaviour during the inspection was outstanding. Pupils show considerable respect and care for each other, reflecting the good role models they encounter in staff. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good and this contributes to the overall enjoyment of learning.

All staff at St John's have high expectations, and they evince considerable professionalism in their discussion of each other's contribution to specific successes. School leaders take great care to preserve, sustain and develop the Catholicity of St John's and to communicate it to all stakeholders. The recently reviewed 'Mission Statement in Action' and its implications for future developments support the school's own judgement of its capacity for sustained improvement. The enthusiasm and dedication of all staff encountered during the inspection, the professional vision and personal contribution of the Headteacher, and the effectiveness of the governing body are evidence that St John's knows its own strengths and needs and is very committed to its Mission Statement.

## WHAT THE SCHOOL NEEDS TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

**School leaders have already correctly identified the following priorities for improvement**

- Continue to review progress towards agreed outcomes of *The Mission Statement in Action* and ensure that perceptions of parents and pupils are known and included.
- Continue to evaluate the impact of the revised RE curriculum on pupil achievement especially in the light of plans to increase curriculum time for the subject.

**In view of the excellent Christian ethos of this school and its network of external partners, staff should also:**

- Explore ways of sharing in-house good practice with other schools especially in relation to the benefits of MRM for developing personal and emotional intelligence skills in young people and in relation to the work on 'Mission Statement in Action'.

## PUPILS

**How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups.**

1

Outcomes for pupils at St John's are outstanding because the learning needs of all pupils are skillfully identified at entry to the school and systematically tracked and supported thereafter by an excellent team of teachers, teaching assistants and speech and language specialists. Attainment against national norms in RE is below average owing to the impact of profound hearing loss and other complex special needs but overall progress and quality of learning are at least good relative to pupils' varying starting points and capabilities. It is evident from pupils' general self-esteem and demeanour that they enjoy their learning. When interviewed, pupils from Yr7, Yr9 and Yr11 spoke of a desire for *additional* RE lessons because teachers made them *interesting* and *fun*. In a KS2 lesson on Pentecost, for instance, a game to reinforce understanding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit captured enthusiasm and engagement from the outset and was followed by freeze-frame drama scenes to help explicate some transformative effects of the Holy Spirit. In another lesson, the concept of Pentecost as the birthday of the Church was reinforced by taking and sharing suitably decorated mini birthday cakes with friends in a 'distant' classroom. In a KS3 lesson the concept of Pentecost was explored through discussion and drama with pupils taking on the role of the disciples who received the Holy Spirit and were transformed.

A school-wide culture of empathy, that permeates lessons and other social interactions, is nurtured through the *Maternal Reflective Method (MRM)*. Through MRM, children are encouraged to listen and talk to each other, to argue and express opinions confidently, to display a sense of humour and to appreciate the spoken and unspoken feelings of others. Its impact is noticeable in an obvious sense of personal worth and community as pupils and staff engage with each other throughout the day with mutual respect. Pupil voice is strong and all can be involved in School Council activities by means of committee structures. They contribute their ideas, for instance, to refurbishment projects, to developing the outdoor prayer area, and to a wide ranging support for local and

international charities. Those who have joined the school at secondary level are highly articulate about the contrasts and benefits of being at St John's. One pupil described it as 'my second home' because here 'we are not taught as if we are deaf, but as normal'. A 'Star of the Week' nomination each Friday at whole-school assembly is a much coveted recognition of special effort and pupils excel at praising and recognizing the merits of the winner. This is a school 'where all pupils are allowed to shine'.

Collective Worship is quite unique in its style and practice with pupils contributing through discussion, role-play, power-point, film-making or movement. They are at ease and act with integrity when praying with others who have different beliefs and attitudes to spirituality. Pupils speak confidently of their relationship with God and how they communicate with Him. Those who arrive at the school with little or no understanding of Christian faith are given opportunities to become involved in liturgical celebrations of the Church's year. Recordings of the Holy Week pageants each year enable staff, parents and pupils to discuss and identify stages of changing spiritual development and awareness in all age groups.

#### *These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
• the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress	<b>1</b>
• pupils' attainment in Religious Education	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.</b>	<b>1</b>

## **PROVISION**

### **How effective the provision is for Catholic education.**

**1**

A range of firmly embedded teaching styles and activities is used to outstanding effect in RE to motivate interest, to sustain concentration and to help pupils assimilate new learning. Teachers' subject knowledge, fine-tuned assessments of pupil capabilities and personalized programmes ensure that high expectations are uppermost at the planning and delivery of RE lessons. In the primary phase, for instance, phonetic teaching of religious vocabulary enables those with minimal language to engage in scripture-based drama scenes, thereby accelerating progress towards individual responses and new learning. In a KS4 lesson observed, pupils who had completed their GCSE course were introduced to 'A' Level RE and they responded confidently and successfully to the appropriately paced and well-planned lesson, enjoying the challenge and rigour. Significant use is made of ICT to scaffold the learning and to provide graphic *aide memoirs* for ensuing lessons. Vibrant displays in classrooms and on corridors stimulate conversation and aid understanding. Younger pupils would, perhaps, benefit from having an annual take-home booklet containing some of these recorded memorable moments for their own future reference and delight.

The RE curriculum is organised around the life of Christ and the teaching of his Church. It responds to a range of needs from GCSE requirements to 'significant learning difficulties' and fulfills diocesan requirements. The recent review of the curriculum augurs well for promoting increased levels of achievement. Ability of staff to modify published schemes

and customize teaching materials to meet individual learning needs is a particular strength. GCSE pupils, for instance, appreciate the *Learn the Lingo!* booklet, a highly illustrated dictionary of religious literacy geared towards examination requirements and they benefit from the excellent revision guide produced in-house. Aspects of *Godly Play* stimulate independent learning for pupils who are aurally and linguistically challenged. *Pupil-progress Trackers* are shared bi-annually with pupils to identify achievements and revise targets. The curriculum is extended through scheduled visits to York, to Scarborough, to Thicket Priory and to Beverley Minster to visit the shrine of the school's patron saint and through the development of an outdoor peace garden. The annual residential trip to Rome attracts 100% attendance as an enriching and valuable experience for Yr10 pupils. Through its partnership links, St John's welcomes many school groups and other visitors who in turn share their experiences and especial expertise with staff and pupils.

An extensive archive of recordings, personal memories, files, photographs and posters, confirms that Collective Worship at St John's delivers 'a powerful message about (their) Faith, (their) prayer life and the importance of worship'. Pupils with different religious beliefs are assisted and supported in their prayer rituals and festivals. At the start and end of each week, all pupils and staff gather and pray together in the school chapel with a theme-linked class-based CW from Tuesdays to Thursdays. Each class has a dedicated prayer area plus access to the school chapel. Pupils confirmed that these are much-visited spaces for quiet reflection. The Chaplain, who is also a parish deacon and deputy head of care, works devotedly with school staff to enrich opportunities for developing spirituality and knowledge of God as an entitlement for all. Preparation for first sacraments and Confirmation, when and as appropriate, is linked whenever possible with St Edward's parish. School, home and parish links are good. Parents attend key CW events whenever possible and especially for the annual Holy Week pageant.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching in Religious Education.</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The use of assessment to support learning in Religious Education.</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs.</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.</b>	<b>1</b>

## LEADERS AND MANAGERS

**How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School.**

**1**

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have ensured that there has been regular diocesan in-service training as well as input from the school's RE department to promote a greater sense of belonging and teamwork among a wide range of professionals, including non-Catholic staff. *All staff* contributed to the recent review of the *Mission Statement in Action* over many weeks, resulting in a handbook of clear support and guidance on the catholicity of the school to which all could subscribe. Leaders and managers are poised to explore the potential of such a tool to sustain and develop 'a centre of excellence open to change and future challenges (while) reflecting the ideals of the life and teachings of Christ'. A strong commitment to nurturing the Catholic ethos, as articulated by the respective heads and deputies of school and residential care, provides a seamless whole school experience for pupils of Christian values in action. Likewise, the promotion of *personal* human values, deeply enshrined in the MRM process across the school, has a

positive effect on *Education in Personal Relationships*. Care policies reflect an awareness of the vulnerability of different groups and monitoring records indicate a sensitive and personalised response by leaders and managers. The school works in partnership with parents and carers who are fulsome in their praise for the care and support given to their children and for the progress they make. They particularly appreciate the way in which the school anticipates issues and needs and addresses them before problems emerge.

Since the last inspection, changes in key leadership roles have helped to deploy specialist teaching skills with greater acuity. An experienced teacher of the deaf is head of the RE department and a newly qualified RE specialist has been instrumental in improving assessment and planning. Changes of this nature have facilitated formal and informal professional dialogue about teaching and learning, improved outcomes for pupils and promoted more effective cross-curricular links. A recording of the *Noah's Ark* project, for instance, indicated very confident interpersonal activities between KS3 pupils and music, drama and RE personnel to very good effect.

Staff at St. John's are very aware of their influence in preparing pupils to be open to change and challenge. 'We embed a moral compass and try to give them armour to test it in the world outside'. The school has an extensive record of involvement in neighbourhood activities, links with the Diocese, inter-school events, residential visits, visiting speakers and theatre groups, off-site work experience, and myriad fund-raising events to support charities at home and abroad. Post 16 provision is outstanding in all aspects. Partnership could be further enhanced if the school shared the outstanding practice observed, for example in relation to the benefits of MRM and in relation to the on-going work on Mission in Action, with other schools. Over the last three years, the Governing Body has been strengthened in expertise and in its practical involvement to enable it to fulfil its statutory and canonical responsibilities. Committee structures are in place and the Mission Statement in Action will provide a framework for governors to review what is happening in the school and move it forward as it strives for excellence. The Governing Body is now well equipped to be the critical friend who can support and challenge in a spirit of trust and openness.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met.</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>How well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and pupil well-being.</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>How effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion.</b>	<b>1</b>