



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: St Joseph's Primary School

LEA: Havering

Inspection Date: 1st July 2015

Reporting Inspector: Pamela Brannigan

This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of School: Primary
School Category: Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils: 4 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 429
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: January 2011

School Address:
115 St Mary's Lane
Upminster
Essex
RM14 2QB

Tel. No. 01708 220277
Headteacher: Mr J. Johnson
Chair of Governors: Mrs F. Maude

Information about the school

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is two form entry in Upminster in the London Borough of Havering and part of the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parishes of St Joseph's Upminster and English Martyrs Hornchurch. There are currently 429 pupils aged 4-11 on roll and the school is over subscribed. The proportion of Catholic pupils is 98%. The majority of pupils are from White British background with a small number from a range of other ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Joseph's is a very good school with many outstanding features. It has a strong Catholic ethos which is at the heart of all it does. Outcomes for pupils are very good as is the provision for Catholic education and the capacity for sustained improvement. Opportunities for spiritual and moral development are interwoven through religious education and the wider curriculum. Pupils are given many opportunities to understand what it means to be part of a Catholic community through 'Faith in Action' and charitable outreach. Leaders are very good role models and have a clear vision for the whole school community which includes initiatives linked to the Catholic life of the school. Teachers and support staff set high expectations for pupil behaviour which results in calm, hard working classes. Governors are experienced, well informed and well placed to challenge and support. Pastoral care is given a high priority by all members of the school community at every level. Relationships within the school are very good and pupils interviewed said they feel safe and well cared for. Both pupils and parents appreciate the many opportunities offered to develop a wide range of interests through a range of extra curricular activities. Parents welcome the high standard of religious education, the Catholicity of the school and the way their children's prayer life is supported and developed. Pupils' standards of attainment are in line with and often exceed diocesan expectations.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The school has a very good capacity for sustained improvement and has put in place systems to ensure its self-evaluation is accurate. The last inspection in 2011 identified no major areas for development other than those already stated by the school in its self evaluation. Since then standards in religious education have risen due to the implementation of the agreed understanding of levels of attainment which have informed lesson planning and assessment. Moderation meetings are held regularly in school and the deanery to share judgements with other Catholic schools. The school gives a high profile to religious education and has put in place strategies to share good practice and support new teachers.

The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors have a clear vision for the Catholicity of the school and the central place of prayer, worship and religious education. The headteacher ensures that all staff are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and improve their skills through staff meetings and attendance at diocesan led training. Fourteen teachers hold the CCRS or equivalent qualification. Governors join staff for a retreat day on a regular basis where the mission of the school is considered. In addition they attend in-service sessions where appropriate. They are dedicated, have a wide range of expertise and are fully involved in the life of the school through frequent visits and meetings with subject leaders.

The current leadership has a very good capacity to maintain effectiveness. The experienced headteacher who will retire at the end of the term shows outstanding leadership of the school through the way he ensures that self-evaluation gives staff and governors an accurate understanding of itself as a Catholic community. He is very well supported by his deputy and the new subject leader for

religious education. Together they are well placed to support colleagues and new teachers. The leadership team has a clear focus on prayer and worship in which they are well supported by all staff and the parish priest from St Joseph's who is a frequent visitor to the school. The link governor for religious education has a wide range of experience and is very well placed to inform governors of current provision and areas for development. Effective systems are in place to develop and strengthen initiatives which lead to good outcomes for all groups of pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Purchase more sets of bibles to enable pupils to gain increased familiarity with scripture.
- Give pupils more responsibility in planning and leading collective worship to raise their sense of ownership.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Both attainment and progress in religious education is outstanding. From entry to Reception pupils make very good progress year on year so that by the time they reach Year 6 attainment reaches and sometimes exceeds diocesan expectations. All lessons observed during the inspection were good or outstanding and pupils worked with interest and commitment. Pupils spoken to said they like religious education and enjoy a wide variety of activities during the lessons. They work well together whether in groups or pairs. Pupils have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and are able to apply religious ideas to their own lives. Workbooks are very well presented, show coverage of the curriculum and indicate excellent progress made by all groups. Pupils show high levels of understanding of the sacraments, Catholic teaching and moral issues. The focus on the 'Big Question' is contributing to pupils' thinking and understanding. However, greater use of bibles in Key Stage 2 would further enhance knowledge of scripture. Behaviour for learning is excellent and pupils are courteous and thoughtful to adults and each other.

Pupils make a very good contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The mission statement, 'The community of St Joseph's School follows the example of Christ, accepting and respecting everyone, as we learn and grow together, safe in His love' is on display in every classroom and well known by all members of the community. Pupils respond very well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. They are keen to take on responsibilities including as prefects, monitors and pupil councillors. The culture of 'Faith in Action' is strong in the school and pupils themselves often suggest the charities they wish to support. They have a good understanding of the theology underpinning their actions and are encouraged to see themselves as part of a global community with responsibilities for other people and the environment. They value the sense of friendship and belonging created within the school.

Prayer and worship are central to school life. Pupils respond very positively to opportunities to develop their faith journey. They are given many opportunities to participate in assemblies, masses and collective worship. Each class begins the day with prayers and reflections. All pupils have the opportunity to join in Easter and Christmas celebrations as well as reconciliation services for pupils in Key Stage 2. The centrality of the Church's liturgical year with its seasons and celebrations are leading to a good understanding of the links with the sacraments and life of Christ. A newly formed Chaplaincy team which includes staff and governors evaluates provision and plans developments to enhance opportunities for spiritual development. Each class has an attractive prayer table which is used as a focus for worship as well as a display board which includes religious vocabulary and pupils' work. Pupils are developing the ability to pray in different ways and at different times. They use the traditional prayers of the church, meditation and their own prayers, many examples of which were seen during the inspection. There are plans for classes to join St Joseph's parish for weekly mass on a rota basis when parents will be invited to 'Stay and Pray.' As they develop, pupils are able to apply aspects of Jesus' life and teaching to their own lives and understand that a sense of service is part of being a member of a Catholic community.

Pastoral care is very good and shared by all members of staff and governors who work closely together to promote the spiritual development of pupils and the Catholic life of the community. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and know that all members of staff are there to help if they need support. Pupils value their school and all it offers. They know they are respected, listened to and encouraged to help each other. Pupils spoke of 'play buddies' where older pupils help younger ones at break times. Parents speak very highly of the school, the headteacher and the care given to their children. They appreciate the support the school gives to pupils through extra-curricular activities. They also praise the excellent quality of education although a small number would like more homework. One parent wrote, 'St Joseph's is a wonderful school catering for the religious and Catholic needs of my child in every way, spiritual, liturgical and practical.' Parents were overwhelmingly positive about the support given to their children's prayer life and the commitment and approachability of staff.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

Leadership at all levels is outstanding. The headteacher and his team demonstrate excellent leadership of the school by the way they promote a clear Catholic vision to the whole community. This is affirmed by staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. The headteacher has ensured that the School Improvement Plan gives priority to Catholic Life and religious education. The current system of self-evaluation is well evidenced, detailed and accurate. The headteacher, deputy head and subject leader have a very good knowledge of areas for development in religious education and are very well placed to support colleagues.

Senior leaders monitor religious education by means of lesson observations, work scrutiny and joint planning which is followed by feedback to individual teachers. The subject leader is part of the deanery moderation group who are currently compiling a portfolio of assessed work to help teachers make accurate judgements. The impact of rigorous monitoring results in high standards in religious education. There is currently a very strong focus on planning and assessment as the school consolidates the implementation of the 'Come and See' religious education programme and the updated Curriculum Directory. The school is putting in place strategies to give further challenge to all groups of pupils. Much emphasis is placed on staff development which includes teaching assistants who play a key role in the school.

Governors work closely with senior leadership and have a very good understanding of strengths and areas for development. They have a wide range of expertise and are very well informed about the life of the school through the headteacher's report and frequent visits. They also attend parents' meetings three times a year and liaise with staff on an informal basis. The parish priest from St Joseph's is knowledgeable and in a good position to support effectively. He visits every week to act as an additional resource in classroom religious education as well as planning masses and liturgies. Governors are in a good position to challenge as well as support. They attend diocesan training to enable them to fulfil their role effectively.

Leaders ensure that the school is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. Diversity is celebrated and pupils are taught to respect other faiths. There are plans to enhance the teaching of other faiths through visits to places of worship and visits from speakers. There are very good links with other schools, both deanery and local authority run, through sporting and cultural events. The subject leader participates in deanery religious education co-ordinators meetings for joint moderation of pupils' work and the sharing of good practice. Pupils are given good opportunities to show leadership and develop a sense of service through charitable fund raising and involvement in the local and wider community. Opportunities for spiritual development ensure that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences. Parents are invited to many school events and are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress. They appreciate the good level of contact with the school which includes curriculum information evenings and letters which enable them to support their children's education and faith journey. The school makes every effort to maintain and develop parish links. This helps pupils, families and parishioners to see school and parish as one community.

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is very good. During the inspection lessons observed were good or outstanding. They are planned carefully with clear learning intentions and a varied range of activities. The school has made a major investment in resources including up to date technology. More sets of bibles for Key Stage 2 would lead to increased familiarity with scripture. Pupils benefit from the high profile given throughout the school to religious education lessons. In all classes observed pupils were engaged and made good progress. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and respond well to pupils' comments as they take every opportunity to develop understanding. Very good support by teaching assistants enables all groups of pupils to make progress. This is a feature of lessons throughout the school. Marking is positive, interactive and enables pupils to identify next steps in their learning. Very good monitoring, assessment, planning and tracking supports the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is outstanding. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The programme 'Come and See' has been in place for two years and is now embedded. The headteacher gives religious education a central place in the life of the school and this is demonstrated by the budget devoted to it and the current level of resources. Engaging religious education displays around the school emphasise the centrality of faith to the work of the community. The curriculum enables pupils to become aware of their responsibility for each other and their environment. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development. The school's programme of retreat days for Year 6 pupils supports their faith journey and sense of worth. The support given to families through a wide range of extra curricular activities gives a strong sense of community to the school. There is every indication that current high standards are likely to be maintained or improved.

Provision for prayer and worship at St Joseph's is very good. Assemblies and liturgies are well planned and contribute greatly to pupils' spiritual development. They often include visual presentations, bible readings drama, singing and music. During the inspection an assembly led by a Year 5 class included every pupil. There was a focus on climate change as well as our God given responsibility to care for our planet through the way we live. A very large group of parents were in attendance. Pupils are involved in collective worship several times a day in their classrooms and are given opportunities for meditation and personal reflection. Each classroom has a very attractive prayer focus with religious artefacts and display boards which include children's work. Pupils attend Mass several times a term as a class or as whole school. They prepare for this by composing bidding prayers, reading, offertory and as altar servers. Music is strength of the school and singing is of a high standard. It is anticipated that a newly developed prayer garden will enhance opportunities for informal prayer and reflection. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to masses, other celebrations and attendance is very high. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their knowledge of Catholic traditions through Reconciliation, Stations of the Cross and Rosary as well as links with the local parish.

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