



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Denominational (S48) Inspection Report

Name of School: St Joachim's Catholic Primary School
Local Authority: Newham
Inspection Date: 19 November 2021
Reporting Inspector: Mrs Angela Podmore

This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 and 2011.

Type of School: Primary
School Category: Academy
Age range of pupils: 3 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 295 plus 25 in Nursery
Appropriate Authority: Board of Trustees
Date of previous inspection: April 2015

School Address:
47 Shipman Road
London
E16 3DT

Tel. No. 020 7476 1658
Headteacher: Mr James Allen
Chair of Governors: Mrs Aine Burke

Information about the school

St Joachim's Catholic Primary School is a one form entry school which is in the process of expanding to a two-form entry school with a Nursery. The school is located in Custom House and serves the parish of St Anne's Custom House. It is part of the Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy Trust. There are currently 295 pupils on roll plus 11 part time and 14 full time nursery children. Most pupils are from ethnic minority groups and a significant number of children have English as an additional language with approximately 35 languages spoken by children attending the school. A number of the children within the school are refugees or asylum seekers.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade1

St Joachim's is an outstanding Catholic school. School leaders have been exemplary in continuing to guide the school in maintaining excellent standards and providing a clear sense of purpose and direction. They demonstrate and share their deep commitment to the church's mission in education daily, acting as excellent role models to the whole school community. The high regard and centrality of Religious Education can clearly be seen in classroom prayer focus tables, the beautiful religious iconography around the school and not least in the positive relationships between all members of this warm, vibrant, caring school community. The school Mission Statement, 'Playing and Praying, Loving and Learning, We achieve this through God', is an integral part of the daily lives of all and can be clearly seen in all aspects of school life. A clear indication of the importance of the Mission Statement to the children are the numerous gifts donated by the year 6 leavers in appreciation of the values it promotes. Prayer and worship are central to the development of pupils who have a real sense of belonging and lead and take a significant responsibility for shaping the religious character of the school. They are warm, friendly, excellent ambassadors of their school and gladly share their rich heritage with visitors. They are rightly proud of their school. The school has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement. The quality of its self-evaluation is very good, leaders at all levels know their school very well. There are good strategies in place to share good practice and support colleagues. Governors work closely with senior leadership and have an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development. They are well informed about the life of the school and visit the school frequently offering both support and challenge. They are equally ambitious for the school and are very well led by a knowledgeable and dynamic Chair of Governors. The curriculum follows the 'Come and See' programme which enables pupils to make strong connections between their faith and their own lives. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school; in the recent survey, of the 83 who responded 100% agreed or strongly agreed that their child enjoyed being at the school.

What the school should do to improve further:

Continue to develop age appropriate pupil leadership of Collective Worship so that it is less adult directed and more child initiated and planned but still maintains its high quality.

Ensure that regular opportunities for pupils to respond to teacher marking and feedback are firmly embedded and consistent across the school.

The leadership of the dedicated Headteacher and his senior leaders in promoting and developing the Catholic Life of the School is outstanding. They are passionate in ensuring that St Joachim's is a nurturing place where pupils can grow and develop into young people with a sense of purpose and commitment and where the school Mission Statement is at the heart of the community. The Mission Statement is a clear and inspiring expression of the church's mission in education and it permeates every aspect of school life. All staff, under the exemplary leadership of the Headteacher, act as excellent role models as is clearly evidenced by the mutual respect and positive relationships demonstrated by all.

Pupils are proud to be members of the St Joachim's family. One pupil, when asked if there was anything she would like to change about the school answered, 'There is no need, it's perfect'. They fully appreciate the many opportunities afforded to them to serve not only the school but the wider community. Pupils show a deep respect for each other and are grateful for the chance to serve their peers as prefects, playground buddies, Religious Ambassadors, or on the school council and they are looking forward to being able once again to be a Mini-Vinnie. They fully appreciate the call to serve others outside the school community because 'It is what Jesus wants us to do'. They talk animatedly about the various ways they raise funds for CAFOD, the Brentwood Catholic Children's Society and other charitable organisations. They played an important part in the recent Remembrance Service at the local Cenotaph under the direction of their Headteacher. They speak very fondly of the opportunity to take part in the annual pilgrimage to Rome or Paris.

Joint initiatives with other local Catholic schools are appreciated by all members of the school community and help them to see themselves as part of a larger Catholic community with shared goals and on a similar journey. Year six children spoke highly of their recent joint trip with another deanery school and of being able to get to know each other as friends rather than as 'competitors' during sporting activities.

During a tour of the school it was clear that children love attending the school and the values it upholds. The guides pointed out that each class is named after a saint and how they learn about these saints. They pointed out the beautiful classroom displays and the religious images and artwork around the school. These reflect the very strong Catholic ethos which permeates throughout and provide a constant reminder of God's presence and meaning in their lives. This very special environment acts as a stimulus to learning and is further enhanced by the pupil designed and painted Wall of Mercy in the playground.

Additional evidence of the school's commitment to promoting the Catholic Life of the school can be seen in their published book 'We believe we are Writers'. It is full of the children's prayers, poems and writings and is testament to the importance of their work and faith.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school with comments such as '....my child...has developed a strong foundation for Catholic beliefs'.

The quality of Religious Education at St Joachim's is outstanding. The excellent provision made for Religious education allows pupils to make rapid sustained progress throughout their time at the school and achieve levels that are above or in line with expectations and favourably comparable with those achieved in other core subjects. Leaders monitor books robustly and regularly to identify strengths and areas for development, as well as ensuring that writing in Religious Education is of the same high standards as that produced in other subjects. Pupils show high levels of religious literacy. These are clearly seen in lessons and in the work in pupils' books. Pupils talk confidently about their work and use the 'Steps for Success' criteria accurately to assess their work and determine their achievement and progress. Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent and they appreciate and enjoy the variety of activities teachers plan to enhance their interest and encourage them to learn. The beautiful school Religious Art portfolio of work is just one example of the way teachers enrich learning in religious education. Pupils also spoke of how drama, dance and music are also used. Excellent drama and freeze frame opportunities were evidenced during the inspection to support the learning of the Coming of the Messiah. Additional adults are used effectively and are confident in supporting pupils' learning. The school is fully inclusive and ensures that all pupils have the necessary resources and materials required to maximise their learning.

In all lesson observed pupils demonstrated exemplary attitudes to learning. They remain attentive and focused. A clear strength is the warm working relationships within the classrooms which enables pupils to grow and flourish. Pupils' books show a wide variety of work, including work on different world faiths, which is consistently well presented. There is clear evidence of sustained progress and the build-up of skills, knowledge and understanding as they move thorough the school. Teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and pupils respond well to the high expectations of their teachers. Teachers know their pupils well and plan lessons which build on prior knowledge, and challenge them to always strive for excellence.

The newly appointed Religious Education subject leader is highly committed. He supports colleagues in planning and assessing pupils' work. Training has been given to ensure that the quality of support provided by additional adults in the classroom is of high quality, meets the needs of individuals and has a measurable impact on children's learning. He has continued to build on the rigorous monitoring programme and staff take advantage of in school, deanery and diocesan monitoring and moderation opportunities to ensure the accuracy of their assessments.

Leaders and governors ensure that opportunities for continued professional development are plentiful and meaningful and that the time allocated to religious education fully meets the requirements of the Bishops Conference. The Religious Education subject leader is well organised and hard-working, leading by example and is forward thinking in how he sees the continued development of the subject. Parents receive regular updates and the termly Religious Education newsletter provides detailed information on what the children will be learning over the course of the term. Parents also enjoy receiving the Wednesday Word sheets and appreciate the workshops organised by the school.

St Joachim's is a community where prayer and worship enjoy a very high profile and are at the very heart of every aspect of school life. Prayer and worship play a pivotal role in helping to develop the spiritual needs of the pupils. Praying together is an integral part of the daily experiences of all in the school community. Pupils enjoy a variety of prayer opportunities; during the inspection pupils in key stage two enjoyed a calm and purposeful meditation session on change in our lives.

Religious education ambassadors are rightly proud of the part they play in helping prepare for and deliver assemblies. They are dedicated and committed to their role and speak of their delight at being chosen for this important role and the service they give to the school community.

In an assembly attended during the inspection, the theme of change was explored. During the celebration pupils demonstrated excellent focus, attention and participation. They sang with great enthusiasm and volunteered enthusiastically to answer the Headteacher's questions. They were totally enthralled by photographs showing how the current year six children had grown and changed throughout their time at the school. The assembly was further enriched by the reverence and skill with which pupils read from scripture and lead the prayers.

Pupils have many opportunities to celebrate and reflect on their rich Catholic traditions throughout the year marking including marking the start of Advent and lunch time sessions to pray the Rosary.

Classroom prayer focus areas are beautifully maintained by both pupils and staff and made personal to each class. They are further enriched by with the newly initiated class prayer books. Pupils thoroughly enjoy being chosen to take the book home to write their own prayer inside. One pupil relayed to the inspector the pride and honour he felt in being the first pupil in his class chosen to write his prayer in his class book.

Vibrant links with the parish are a strength of the school and contribute well to the religious experiences of the children. The Parish Priest is a frequent and welcome visitor to the school. All pupils love and enjoy his visits to their classrooms, where he has delivered talks on baptism to the younger children and discussed curriculum topics with the older ones. He welcomes pupils to a weekly Mass in the parish church. During one of his visits to the school he was so impressed by the fluency and reverence of pupils reading of scripture that he asked a parishioner to train a group of youngsters in reading at the weekly Masses pupils attend.