



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Inspection Report



Name of School: St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Dagenham

LA: Barking & Dagenham

Inspection Date: 16th November 2016

Reporting Inspector: Pamela Brannigan

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

Type of School: Primary
School Category: Federated Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils: 3 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 426
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: 4th November 2011

School Address:
Connor Road
Dagenham
Essex
RM9 5UL

Tel. No. 020 8270 6480
Executive Headteacher: Mrs B. Horton
Head of School: Mrs. N. Holden
Chair of Governors: Fr S. Myers

Information about the school

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School with nursery in Dagenham is in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and part of the diocese of Brentwood. It has recently become fully two form entry and is oversubscribed. The school has federated with another Catholic school in the borough and now has a joint governing body, an executive headteacher and a head of school. St Joseph's serves the local parish of Holy Family, Dagenham from which most pupils come. There are currently 426 pupils aged 3-11 on roll, 84% of whom are Catholics with the remainder almost all coming from other Christian denominations. There is a well above average number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, mostly of African heritage and 62% of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is around the national average as is the number of children who receive the pupil premium.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Joseph's is an outstanding school with a Catholic ethos which permeates all areas of its work. Outcomes for pupils are excellent as is the provision for Catholic education and the capacity for sustained improvement. Opportunities for spiritual and moral development are interwoven through religious education, prayer and an understanding of what it means to be part of a Catholic community. Leaders are excellent role models and have a clear vision for the whole school community which includes initiatives linked to the Catholic life of the school. A 'Rabbuni' group has been introduced to provide guidance, discussion, challenge and equality of provision for both schools in the federation. The group includes leaders from both schools as well as their respective parish priests. Pastoral care is shared by all members of the school community at every level and supports learning. Relationships within the school are excellent and pupils spoken to say they feel safe and well cared for. Parents welcome the Catholicity of the school and the good level of communication in place. Pupils' standards of attainment are in line with and sometimes exceed diocesan expectations.

The school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement with detailed and accurate self-evaluation which links into the School Improvement Plan. The last inspection in 2011 identified three areas for development: to develop planning and teaching in religious education across the school by developing best practice following the planned programme of further lesson observations; to revisit the mission statement as part of the review prior to settling into the new school building; develop opportunities for pupils to take a greater lead in the delivery of learning in religious education classes and liturgical work. All areas been well addressed and standards in religious education have risen due to support for teachers, thorough tracking and regular assessment. Moderation meetings are held regularly in the federated schools and the deanery to share judgements with other Catholic schools. There are also very good links with the Catholic secondary school to which most pupils transfer at the end of Key Stage 2. The school gives a high profile to religious education and has very good strategies in place to share good practice and support new teachers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement the areas identified in the religious education action plan particularly in the area of support for new staff.
- Raise the level of awareness among parents of homework tasks.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Both attainment and progress in religious education are very good. The excellent start pupils are given in Early Years ensures that from a very low base 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 better and pupils worked with interest and commitment. Behaviour for learning is excellent. 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.

Any underachievement is quickly identified and effective strategies put in place to support pupils. They 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. They show high levels of understanding of scripture, sacraments, Catholic teaching and moral issues. Pupils behave well and are courteous and thoughtful to adults and each other.

Pupils also make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The mission statement, 'Each one of us has been created by God for a special purpose and is therefore uniquely special. Together we pray, grow and learn in the footsteps of Jesus' is reviewed regularly 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 membership of the School Council, playground buddies, and as prefects. A 'Coram Deo' group help teachers to plan masses and assemblies and set up a focus for prayer. Pupils often identify the charities they wish to support and in recent years these have included Cafod, Macmillan Coffee Mornings and Brentwood Catholic Children's Society. Harvest produce is donated to the local foodbank and pupils always respond to disaster appeals. They have a good understanding of the theology underpinning their actions. Pupils are encouraged to see themselves as part of a wider community with responsibilities for other people and the environment. They visit local care homes to get to know elderly people and entertain them. Pupils value the sense of community and belonging created within the school. 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.

Prayer and worship are central to school life. Pupils respond very positively to opportunities to develop their faith journey, including attending occasional before school Masses. They are given many opportunities to plan and participate fully in assemblies, Masses and class acts of worship. They are encouraged in this by the parish priest and many pupils act as altar servers at both school and parish Masses. 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. 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 also take responsibility for the maintenance of the prayer table and often bring in their own religious artefacts from home. Pupils are developing the ability to pray in different ways and at different times. They use scripture, the traditional prayers of the Church, reflection and their own prayers, many examples of which were seen during the inspection. The Angelus is said each day in Key Stage 2 classes and a lunchtime Rosary group during May and October is well attended. In Lent a living Stations of the Cross is part of the traditional Catholic devotions to which families are invited.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

Senior leaders give a high priority to the provision for religious education. All staff are asked to contribute to the self-evaluation document which is shared with the governing body who scrutinise it through the Standards and Monitoring group. Leaders have put in place a monitoring programme which includes lesson observations, work scrutiny and joint planning which is followed by feedback to individual teachers. The leader for learning for religious education checks on recorded levels at the end of each topic to track pupils' progress. The impact of rigorous monitoring results in high standards in religious education. Tracking is detailed and analysed to gauge standards and identify any underachievement. Leaders give a very strong focus to planning to ensure pupils have access to a wide range of cross-curricular activities including, art, drama, role play and debate. The school has put in place strategies to give further challenge to all groups of pupils. Professional development ensures staff are well supported in their work. This includes teaching assistants who play a key role in the school.

The executive headteacher, head of school and governors have a clear vision for the Catholicity of the school and the central place of prayer, worship and religious education. Leadership ensures that all staff are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and improve their skills through staff meetings and attendance at diocesan led training. Eight teachers hold the CCRS qualification and new staff are encouraged to undertake the course. The current leadership has an excellent capacity to maintain effectiveness. The executive headteacher shows outstanding leadership of a Catholic community through her drive and commitment to all aspects of school life. Together with the head of school and

leader of learning for religious education she promotes a clear Catholic vision to the whole community. Leadership has ensured that the School Improvement Plan gives priority to Catholic Life and religious education. The religious education action plan is detailed, wide ranging and comprehensive with clear objectives and success criteria. The current system of self-evaluation is well evidenced, detailed and accurate.

Governors work closely with senior leadership and have a very good understanding of strengths and areas for development. They are well informed about the life of the school through the headteacher's report and frequent visits. Governors also attend staff meetings and training linked to changes in the curriculum and assessment. They are closely involved in steps for school improvement through their involvement in compiling the school improvement plan. They are well placed to support and challenge. The parish priest who is also chair of governors and one of the link governors for religious education plays a major role in the life of the school through frequent visits as well as planning masses and liturgies with staff and pupils. He also acts as an additional resource in classroom religious education and supports staff in their personal understanding of the Church's teaching.

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. Visits to local places of worship encourage an understanding of the wider community. There are very good links with other schools, both deanery and local authority run, through sporting and cultural events. Pupils are given very 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. The school offers regular workshops for parents to help increase knowledge and understanding of the religious education. Parents appreciate the good level of contact with the school which includes curriculum information letters to enable them to support their children's education and faith journey. However, a number would like more information about religious education homework. Parish links are excellent with the school using facilities and supporting the annual bazaar. Masses are held in the parish church which is adjacent to the school. These close links enable pupils, families and parishioners to see school and parish as one 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. The inclusion manager is available to support individual pupils and their families. Pupils spoken to said they feel safe, well cared for and know that all members of staff are there to help if they need support. They value their school and all it offers and know they are respected, listened to and encouraged to help each other.

Provision

Grade 1

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is excellent. During the inspection all lessons observed were good or better. Teachers employ a range of strategies to engage and meet the needs of all pupils. Lessons are planned carefully with clear learning intentions and a wide range of activities. The school has made a major investment in resources including up to date technology and new sets of bibles for Key Stage 2 which has led 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 fully engaged and made very good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and respond well to pupils' comments as they take every opportunity to develop understanding. Higher order questioning was evident in many lessons observed. Very good support by teaching assistants enables all groups of pupils to make progress. This is a feature of lessons especially in Early Years where a baptism was re-enacted in the church enabling pupils to become familiar with the significance of the sacrament. In Key Stage 1 lessons explored the symbolism behind what happens at baptism and showed a clear development as pupils used the religious terminology and vocabulary in role play and linked activities. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are able to work independently and use references from scripture and the lives of the saints to support debate and written work. 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 which follows the 'Come and See' programme. This is enriched by study

of religious paintings, visits to the parish church and the use of ICT. The 'Rabbuni' group supports the school to ensure the teachings of the Church are interpreted and presented correctly. The executive headteacher and head of school give religious education a central place and this is demonstrated by the budget devoted to it and the current level of resources. Vibrant 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 support given to families through a 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 outstanding. Assemblies and liturgies are very well planned and contribute greatly to pupils' spiritual development. They often include visual presentations, bible readings, drama, singing and music. During the inspection a powerful assembly led by the head of school linked the message of anti-bullying week with the persecution Jesus suffered and his teaching on forgiveness. Pupils helped to prepare the hall for the assembly and members of the 'Coram Deo' group led the prayers. Pupils participated with interest and concentration and were keen to respond to questions. They are involved in collective worship several times a day in their classrooms and are given opportunities for 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 throughout the year and prepare for this by selecting hymns, composing bidding prayers, reading, offertory and as altar servers. All teachers are involved in the provision of collective worship with the support of school leadership for new members of staff. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to masses, other celebrations and attendance is good. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their knowledge of Catholic traditions through Reconciliation, the Angelus, Stations of the Cross and Rosary as well as close links with the local parish. A recent initiative to provide prayer bags for pupils to take home on a rota basis is enhancing the links between home and school by enabling parents to support their children's faith journey. There are also plans to establish retreat days for years 5 and 6. Provision for a meditation area is also planned to give further opportunities for prayer to pupils.

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.