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Diocese of Arundel & Brighton

SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Report on the inspection of denominational education under
Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Davey Drive
Brighton
BN1 7BF

Chair of Governors:	Rev P Turner
Headteacher:	Mrs M Mc Dermott
Inspectors:	Mrs A Ireland Mr S Beck
Inspection date:	2 April 2008

Introduction

Description of the school

The school is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Brighton and Hove Deanery of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. It is maintained by Brighton and Hove Local Authority. The principal parishes which the school serves are St Joseph's, Brighton and St Francis of Assisi, Brighton. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 59%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and at least 10 % in Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 159. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals is well above average. Around 40% of the pupils receive extra support in class. Nearly half the pupils come from a wide range of ethnic minority groups with the remainder coming from White British families. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is above average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

St Joseph's is a good school with outstanding features, such as the quality of leadership and the care of pupils. It is truly a place where all work hard to develop a 'sense of community through prayer'. It is a warm, happy and welcoming school with a shared vision of what it means to be a Christian community. The mission statement is embedded in all aspects of school life. This results in a strong commitment to the well being and development of the whole child. Worship and prayer lie at the heart of the school. The provision for prayer is outstanding. The quality of provision for collective worship is good. The school should now consider developing more opportunities for classes to participate in assemblies. Pupils are making very good progress in religious education because of an exciting and challenging curriculum, good teaching and sensitive leadership. Assessment is developing well. Assessment and tracking of individual pupil progress now need to be developed further in order to have a greater impact on attainment. All the issues from the previous inspection have been fully addressed. Thorough and effective procedures for self evaluation are in place and, as a result, the school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas of development. This, together with the strong leadership of the head teacher and senior management team, supported by the governing body, indicates that the school has a good capacity to improve.

Grade 2

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Develop a programme to include more opportunities for classes to lead and participate in assemblies.

Continue to develop the assessment process and the tracking of individual pupils' progress so that assessment has a greater impact on attainment.

The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher, strongly supported by the senior management team and governors, is highly effective in creating a strong Catholic community and a cohesive team. This has a very positive impact on the quality of education pupils receive. Her clear vision of Catholic education, firmly based on the common good, ensures that St Joseph's is an inclusive school where every pupil is nurtured as a unique and valued individual. The mission statement has a very high profile and appears everywhere, including on all school documentation and on pupils' work books. The excellent work carried out recently on the importance of the mission statement has ensured that it is fully embedded in the life of the school community. It is regularly referred to in lessons and assemblies. The development of child friendly versions, including one set to music, makes sure that adults and pupils are fully aware of, and subscribe to, its importance in driving the work of the school. Governors know their school well. They willingly share their expertise in order to support the school. They play a very active part in school life. They effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities through regular reports and committee meetings, discussions with subject leaders, programmed visits and attendance at staff meetings and open days. As a result, they successfully monitor the curriculum and the Catholic life of the school and have an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Together with the headteacher and senior management team, they are committed to moving the school forward, whilst maintaining and developing its Catholic ethos.

Grade 1

Quality of Catholic life of the school

The quality of Catholic life is good with many excellent features. High quality artefacts and eye catching displays, such as the beautiful Easter display in the school entrance, mark the school as distinctively Catholic. The Gospel values, enshrined in the mission statement, are reflected in the excellent relationships within the school community. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. This, together with the Golden Agreement based on pupils' rights and responsibilities, and a behaviour programme based on positive affirmation, encourages pupils to behave well. The commitment of staff to the support and care for all pupils, especially those with special educational needs and other difficulties, is commendable.

It is evident in the wide range of strategies the school has put in place, such as the provision of learning and inclusion mentors, the work of the very effective welfare officer and the 'wrap around' care offered to pupils. Close links with other agencies, such as the housing officer and the Sure Start programme, have also been developed to assist families when difficulties arise. The school values its inclusive identity. It sensitively welcomes and supports pupils and their parents from other faith backgrounds. The rich diversity of the school community is celebrated in a variety of ways. For example, the school recently joined with a local Infants' School to celebrate Divali. The partnership with parents is good. It is demonstrated in the work of the newly formed and enthusiastic parents' association. Parents have very positive attitudes towards the school. They value the Catholic education and the care their children receive. One parent wrote, "The care shown to each child is exactly what we would expect from a Christian school. We know that our child is not only respected but loved". Community cohesion is strong. Pupils are encouraged to take care of each other and to exercise responsibility in a variety of ways, including the school council and playground buddies. They are aware of the needs of others and regularly donate to a range of charities. Good links are made with the local community, including the Brighton and Hove Football Club, whose players come into school to regularly work with pupils. The school has strong links with both local and deanery schools. The partnership with the parishes is good. This relationship is further strengthened by the contribution of the parish priest, who is an active and valued member of the school community. He regularly visits classes, leads assemblies and works closely with staff and pupils. Good support is given by the school to the parish based preparation for the Sacraments. The school is currently seeking other ways to further develop parish links.

Grade 2

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

The school regards prayer and worship to be at the heart of the community and the inspectors agree with this. Through a programme of Masses, assemblies and liturgies, the school more than meets its statutory obligations with regards to collective worship. The school has worked hard to improve its provision for class worship. For example, staff have received training in developing class liturgies and a member of staff has been appointed to offer further support. The assembly on 'The Easter Story' was very well planned. It included meditation, drama, reflection and prayer. There was a very good balance between the input from the deputy head teacher and the parish priest, and the pupils taking part. Throughout, pupils were attentive and prayerful. The Key Stage 2 drama group, recently formed to take part in the regular Bible assemblies, acted with confidence and enjoyment. The school should now consider developing a programme which offers more opportunities for classes to lead and participate in assemblies. The provision for prayer is outstanding. Prayer areas around the school and in classrooms are excellent. They are attractive and relate to the liturgical year and the religious education topics. Pupils are encouraged to use them during the day and do so.

Items, such as prayer cards, prayer boxes and pebbles are available on prayer tables to assist and enhance pupils' personal prayer. Excellent opportunities are given to pupils to compose and use their own prayers. Often these are deeply reflective. In addition, pupils are invited to experience a wide range of prayer forms, such as the traditional prayers of the Church, litanies, meditation and spontaneous prayer. Teachers are very good role models. They make good use of music, incense, candles, ICT and the school gardens to create an appropriate atmosphere for prayer.

Grade 2

Religious education

Achievement and standards

Pupils' attainment on entering school is generally below national expectations. Pupils make very good progress at every level and by the end of Key Stage 2, attainment is at least average and sometimes above. Attainment in religious education compares very favourably with literacy and is often better. This applies to pupils from other faith backgrounds and equally to boys and girls. Pupils are developing a good religious vocabulary at all levels. Many can articulate their thoughts and ideas about what they have learnt and willingly share these in lessons. For example, as part of their work on Thanksgiving, pupils in Year 3 were able to recall and discuss four elements of the Eucharistic Prayer, which they felt were important. Most pupils are well able to relate their lessons to their own experiences. An example of this was observed in Year 5, where a pupil had written her own version of the Confiteor. When asked about it, she said the activity had made her reflect on her own life choices. Pupils make very good use of skills gained in other curriculum areas, such as literacy, art, ICT and Design Technology. For example, pupils in the Reception Class were making stick puppets which they then used to dramatise the story of the Ten Lepers, while in Year 6, pupils were making a video about the Mass for Year 2 pupils. The presentation of pupils' work in books across the school is excellent. The content is of high quality and indicates that pupils are able to record work in a variety of interesting ways. Pupils clearly value these books and take a real pride in what they have achieved.

Grade 2

Quality of provision for religious education

The quality of provision is good with some excellent features. Teaching is generally good and sometimes outstanding. Very good teaching is marked by careful planning with clear learning objectives which are shared with pupils, and the application of a range of teaching strategies which make lessons interesting. All teachers use questioning skills extensively in order to challenge pupils to extend their learning. Teachers plan a variety of activities, such as role play, discussion and ICT, which enable pupils to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the subject. As a result, lessons are fun, visual and relevant.

Good cross curricular links are made to enhance lessons. For example, as part of their work on The Last Supper, pupils in Year 1 were making clay chalices. Assessment is developing well. Some good examples of ongoing formative assessment were observed in lessons. Good use is made of the plenary session to encourage pupil self assessment. Work is assessed in line with diocesan guidance and staff are currently involved in levelling samples of pupils' work in order to ensure consistency across the school. Tracking of individual pupils' work is at an early stage and is already beginning to raise standards. The school should continue to develop assessment and tracking in order to set targets for the future and for the process to have a greater impact on attainment. Marking is consistently very good. Teachers use summative and developmental marking in order to encourage pupil response and to deepen understanding. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and support pupils very well to ensure that they are making the best possible progress. Parents are kept well informed about the curriculum and their children's work. Homework is used to encourage, inform and extend knowledge gained in lessons. A good example of this was seen in the Reception Class, where pupils were making a puzzle to take home in order to retell the story of the Ten Lepers.

Grade 2

The religious education curriculum

The school fully meets the requirements of the 10% weekly curriculum. The recommended 'Here I Am' programme is followed and all topics and themes are covered. Teachers supplement the programme with a wide range of challenging activities, which are matched to pupil ability. This has a significant effect on the quality of provision. Planning is of a high standard. Teachers are using the new diocesan planning sheets well, annotating and evaluating them where necessary in order to inform future planning. The teaching of other faiths is enhanced through topics covered in the wider curriculum. It is celebrated in books and displays, such as the attractive display on Judaism. The curriculum provides very good opportunities for spiritual and moral development. Of particular note is the class 'Big Question Book' in which pupils write questions about faith and life, such as, 'Why do people from different religions quarrel with each other?' and 'If there is a God, why is there disease in the world?' Other pupils are then encouraged to respond and older pupils are given the opportunity to discuss possible solutions with the parish priest. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards the religious education curriculum. They enjoy the challenging activities planned for them, particularly when they are practical. As a consequence they are well behaved and remain on task. Sex education and education for personal relationships are linked to religious education and taught in the context of Catholic faith. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are well supported by adults and appropriate activities so that they access the curriculum fully. The subject is very well resourced with good quality books, posters and artefacts. Excellent use is made of ICT, particularly the interactive white board.

Grade 2

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of religious education is excellent. Although the co-ordinator has been in post a relatively short time, her enthusiasm and hard work have had a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning. This has enabled the school to move forward rapidly with regards to religious education. With the strong support of the headteacher, the co-ordinator ensures that the subject has a high profile throughout the school. She keeps governors well informed about current practice, liaising closely with the link governor and delivering presentations at governors' meetings. She successfully oversees the curriculum to ensure consistency of delivery and content. She has a well defined monitoring role, which includes scrutiny of pupils' work and planning, and class observation. She, therefore, has an accurate view of strengths and areas for development. This has resulted in the formation of a detailed action plan linked to raising attainment. The co-ordinator is an excellent role model for staff and willingly shares her expertise both within the school community and at diocesan level. Staff are, therefore, very well supported in the planning and delivery of the subject. A good programme of training and staff meetings includes a termly meeting with the priest, who is chair of governors, on the relevant 'Here I Am' themes. This means that staff are confident and empowered to deliver the religious education programme. The helpful and informative religious education policy and the excellent staff handbook, which clearly lay down expectations and procedures for the teaching of religious education, are particularly helpful to new staff. The quality of displays celebrating pupils' work in religious education and other areas of the curriculum is excellent. All staff work together to create an exciting learning environment both inside and outside the school. This impacts very positively on the educational and spiritual experiences offered to pupils.

Grade 1