



Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

INSPECTION REPORT

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

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D/ES Number: 936/3423

Headteacher: Mrs Theresa Kenefick

Chair of Governors: Mrs Sally Nestor

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 01 October 2013
Date of previous inspection: 24 February 2009

Lead Inspector: Mr Stephen Beck
Associate Inspector: Mrs Margaret Clerkin

Description of School

St Joseph's is a large, over-subscribed Catholic primary school in the Epsom Deanery. At the time of the last inspection the governors were consulting on its permanent growth to two form entry. This has progressed and the school now has two forms of entry from Reception to Year 4 and one and a half forms of entry in Years 5 and 6. St Joseph's school has an on-site independent nursery where an increasing number, now 70%, of the children attend before starting at the school. St Joseph's parish church is adjacent to the school so most children and their families worship there. There are currently 389 pupils on roll, 99.5% of whom are Catholic. Around half of the pupils are White British and there are a number of families from the Philippines, Brazil, Spain and Italy represented. A high number of pupils speak English as an additional language with only a small percentage of these being at an early stage of language development. An average proportion of pupils are on the school's SEN register as having learning difficulties, which are mostly concerned with speech and communication. A below average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals and accordingly a below average number of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. There are 16 full time and 7 part time teachers on the staff, 78% of whom are Catholic. 2 teachers hold the CCRS qualification.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St Joseph's School is a highly effective and distinctly Catholic school. Excellent organisation has developed well established procedures for the monitoring of the Catholic life of the school. As a result the school has a clear and accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. It considers that its provision of Catholic Education remains at the outstanding level reported in the last inspection and the inspectors have been able to validate this view. There is a great awareness of what needs to be done to ensure its strengths are maintained and successfully built upon. It is very well placed to continue its outstanding level of performance. The excellent self-evaluation statement gives an indication of the high profile given to religious education in the broadest sense and is highly commendable.

The school has high expectations of pupils, both in work and behaviour. It is to its great credit that through a period of change, with expansion to two forms of entry and extensive building work, the school has remained committed to its core values and to providing the highest possible quality of Catholic Education for its parish with which it has exceptionally strong links.

The school has maintained a momentum of improvement, enhancing all areas, most notably in its strong prayer life and religious education curriculum. St Joseph's School has maintained the strengths identified in the previous inspection which noted, 'St Joseph's is an outstanding Catholic school with an active commitment to live out its mission to "recognise God in each other" and this continues to be its highly successful *raison d'être*. A parent summed this up in writing saying, *"In our opinion, the school provides a caring, nurturing and spiritual environment for the children. There is a strong emphasis on celebration of achievement and sharing of talent. At every whole school event we have attended there has been a calm, happy and inclusive atmosphere with clearly happy and well behaved children. I have frequently been moved to tears, simply because it is such a lovely environment. From our perspective the school is incredibly well run and provides an outstanding Catholic education for our children."*

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

With no identified areas for development in the last inspection the school is to be commended for not 'resting on its laurels' as complacency is not seen as an option. It has continued to develop the Catholic religious experience provided to its pupils through developing an age appropriate 'Way of the Cross' liturgy through a four year project in consultation with staff and pupils. This has become an intrinsic part of the school's prayer life supported by a school produced 'Walking the Way' booklet to support this prayer activity. It has been widely disseminated as good practice.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

Whilst there remain no significant areas for improvement the school should continue to build on its strengths by;

- Embedding and enhancing the provision provided through the adoption of the revised 'Here I Am' religious education scheme, 'Come and See'.
- Maintaining the momentum of improvement through the concluding stages of expansion of the school.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The exceptionally cohesive nature of the leadership at St Joseph's is both highly effective and a great strength. It reflects an overarching collegiality that has resulted in the building of a tangibly strong home, school, parish partnership with a clear Catholic identity. The headteacher has a clear vision of the nature of a Catholic school, sets high expectations and has established a strong team that shares and is involved in realising that vision.

St Joseph's is a continually self-evaluating school which supports highly effective promotion of learners' spiritual and moral development. This collegiate approach involves the deputy, staff and governors' ensuring the Catholic identity of St Joseph's School is maintained. It has secured a wide involvement of the community in an impressively extensive range of clubs, projects and opportunities to participate in the life of the school. This is typified in the excellent development of school facilities through expansion and a range of successful external accreditations.

The governing body has made a vital contribution to the leadership and management of the school through its supportive, but challenging approach. They know their school well and are able to reflect on its strengths and areas for development and see improvements through to a conclusion. Their monitoring of standards and the work of the religious education link governor has enabled them to gain a clear overview of religious education in the school.

The decision to set up project teams to lead new projects is commendable and has proved highly effective for example 'The Way of the Cross' and 'Using the Church as a resource' With a high parental questionnaire response of 43% it is noteworthy that virtually 100% were positive.

As a parent wrote, *"In my opinion, St Joseph's reflects and teaches a modern approach to the Catholic faith, whilst still up-keeping traditional values. This balance is crucial, and St Joseph's, led by a brilliant headteacher and wonderful caring staff achieves this superbly."*

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

The school's mission statement says, 'We place prayer and worship at the centre of everything we do' and this statement is without doubt lived out in the daily life of the school. Pupils are provided with extensive opportunities for prayer and as the school itself describes, 'vibrant' worship. St Joseph's is a worshipping community in which pupils practise their faith with confidence in a very secure environment. The provision of, and opportunities to, participate in personal and collective worship are outstanding, greatly enhancing pupils' spiritual and moral development. Within this provision pupils meet a broad range of opportunities to experience whole school, year group and class celebrations which they fully embrace.

The prayer life of the school is extensive, with pupils having an excellent knowledge and understanding of the traditional prayers of the Church, in addition to composing their own prayers and participating in spontaneous prayer. Prayer and worship are at the heart of the school. Planning in this area is of a high order and is well linked to the religious education scheme, liturgical year and special occasions. In an assembly attended, the whole school was engaged in worship that was well constructed to offer something to all. Pupils spoke out and interacted together well. The school choir added a special dimension to the celebration with some beautiful singing. The headteacher brought meaning to the assembly through the sharing of pictures of her family linking lineage back to Abraham. Parents often attend assemblies and the school is to be commended for the level of inclusivity which the parents commented they felt existed. This they attributed to the efficient dealing with any issues that arose and the recognition the school gives to its cultural diversity.

An excellent example of the strength of the prayer life of the school was seen in a preschool prayer service held outside. This was open to all, was well attended and is led on a weekly basis by a teacher. This provided a relevant, reverent and spiritual start to the day. It is based on the liturgical calendar, on this occasion focussing on the Rosary. The priests and sisters from St Joseph's parish are regular visitors to the school. Their role in supporting the religious and spiritual development of the pupils and the wider school community is pivotal in the strength of the home, school, parish triangle that is clearly evident. The school welcomes and benefits greatly from the Chaplaincy role they provide. A parent stated, *"I find the connection between school and church life to be a wonderfully supportive environment for my children. It's invaluable to me that my children are growing up as part of a multi-generational church and school community."*

Grade 1

How effectively does the school promote community cohesion?

Once again the school succinctly sums up its success in this area through its mission statement which says, 'We value equality of relationships and seek to recognise God in each other'. The school experiences a high level of engagement with its families in cultural activities and their commitment to supporting the school's charity and overseas projects. The holding of Fairtrade and International Schools Status since 2009, serves to confirm St Joseph's commitment to community cohesion in a global context.

As a predominantly Catholic community it shares a common faith, regardless of culture, language and social background. By virtue of this mix, the school provides an arena for everyone to explore diversity through relationships; to challenge one another, to examine prejudice and to work out how they can live cohesively in a society they describe as 'the same but different'. The school has an extensive programme that supports the sharing of social responsibility, gives pupils an understanding of global issues and celebrates cultural diversity and cohesion.

During the past academic year the school supported an impressive range of charity appeals including, CAFOD, HCPT, Cabrini, Epsom Food Bank and other charities. Pupils are particularly involved in supporting a village community in Kerala. There are clear links between this work and the school's curriculum that provides strong cross curricular links particularly in the areas of religious education and personal health social education (PHSE).

The school prepares pupils to adapt to demands of the changing world, to show respect for other cultures and religious beliefs thus equipping them for their future life. The school is an integral part of the Parish of St Joseph's to which it is geographically adjacent. Pupils are taught and encouraged to understand others and be aware of their opinions, feelings and anxieties. This proactively encourages an understanding of the beliefs of others, their cultures and traditions, along with the importance of having regard for these differences and challenging prejudice. They promote, through spiritual development, an awareness of soul and a view of life beyond the here and now. Pupils, parents and carers from different backgrounds work and interact well together.

The school is effective in ensuring equal opportunities for all to succeed. There are no barriers to access in participation in learning and wider activities, eliminating variations in outcomes for different groups. Pupils are quick to show concern for the wellbeing of others, especially the weak and vulnerable. Pupils are encouraged to assume greater levels of responsibility as they move through the school by taking on roles such as, buddies' membership of the school council, Eco Warriors, Fitness Friends, Sport Leaders and Prayer Buddies between Years 1 and 3. Relationships in the school and beyond are among its outstanding features. The pupils have exposure to other faiths through their rich religious education curriculum.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Attainment in religious education is high. It at least matches and often exceeds attainment in writing and other subjects. High teacher expectations, coupled with excellent support from teaching assistants, result in a high quality output by pupils. All groups make very good progress as exemplified in their books and lesson observation records. More able pupils are challenged to stretch their thinking skills and understanding, while pupils with special educational needs, pupils with English as additional language and those eligible for pupil premium also make very good progress. This is as a result of well-planned lessons and differentiated tasks that build on previous attainment and are well matched to pupils' abilities appropriately based on ongoing assessments. A high standard of work is evidenced in all age groups because children take true pride in their 'special books' and own their work.

Notably the school's Ofsted report highlighted pupils' religious education work as a strength. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are exceptionally strong because of the many opportunities provided to extend their vocabulary and to perform in assemblies, liturgies, poetry competitions, musical recitals and productions. Religious vocabulary is particularly well developed through a strong focus on this in all religious education lessons and through cross curricular links. Pupils not only have the vocabulary, but also demonstrate an ability to use and apply it in both their oral and written work.

Pupil behaviour is exemplary, supported by the school's culture, which is one where the main preoccupation of pupils is to learn and they are well supported to become confident and relaxed learners. Pupils are unreservedly polite, helpful and supportive towards each other, staff and visitors and there is a strong community feel to the school.

Grade 1

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Four lessons were observed during the course of the inspection and all were outstanding. Classroom management skills throughout the school are of a very high order. The religious education scheme supports the teaching but this is made particularly effective by strong staff subject knowledge that gives a real depth to the teaching. Teachers demonstrate an ability to deliver very high levels of teaching that will meet the needs of all pupils comprehensively. The success of lessons stems from the setting of high expectations and the exceptional quality of teachers' planning and preparation. Clear learning objectives are shared with pupils at the start of lessons and revisited during lessons as appropriate. Teachers build successfully on previous learning and make good use of cross curricular links to maximise opportunities to integrate the teaching of religious education so that it permeates all subjects. Pupils' books are well marked. There is evidence of wide use of developmental marking and a programme of whole school book scrutiny is in place. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively supported in their learning with classroom support staff providing excellent but discreet help that has a significant impact on their learning and progress and that of the wider class. The school has developed on-going assessment to inform planning and move children's learning forward making good use of pupil targets and levels.

The lessons seen in Reception on the theme of Baptism created a true sense of 'awe and wonder' through role play, excellent use of resources and excellent development of religious vocabulary. The lessons were marked by above age related expectations and high teacher standards to which the pupils rose. An excellent range of activities were provided, accessible to individual pupils at their own level. The planning for and excellent deployment of support staff greatly enhanced learning. Pupil learning and progress was explicit, as was the building of self-confidence through ongoing teacher affirmation. Good use was made of a range of teaching strategies including talk partners which is being well developed in such young pupils. Lessons benefitted greatly from adult participation.

A Year 2 class working on the topic of 'belonging' had an excellent introduction where pupils were given a pebble by prayer monitors and asked to think about someone who may not feel that they belonged. The pupils responded with thoughtful answers as the pebbles were returned. One described this as, "*Being placed in the hands of God.*" With creative use of stimuli and resources, including individualised letters and interactive whiteboard, the input and activities linked to this lesson explored the meaning of the 'Light of Christ' in a skilfully age appropriate and challenging way.

A Year 4 lesson challenged pupils to relate the calling of the Disciples to them, in the context of today. Teacher, support staff and headteacher involvement through role play was inspirational. It prompted thoughtful discussion through a range of scenarios including the headteacher being asked by the Pope to move to a school in Rome.

In a Year 6 lesson on 'Belonging, Vocation and Commitment' the calling and prayer of St Francis were examined and learning was exceptionally well supported by a high level of challenge that served to meet the needs of more able pupils by engaging them in research and reflecting on Pope Francis' message. They analysed the message and considered how it inspired them. This led to the production of deep, thoughtful answers for example, *"It inspires me to open my soul to others."* The use of prayer, reflection and talk partners are a strength of all religious education lessons as is the building on prior learning.

Grade 1

Quality of the Curriculum

The quality of the religious education curriculum is extremely good; it offers equality of access and opportunity for all and is suitable for the age of learners. The school meets the required 10% curriculum time for religious education in all key stages. Topics from 'Come and See' are all covered including the teaching of other faiths. The school effectively utilises resources from its previous scheme. Parents are very supportive of the religious education curriculum, which they confirmed provides their children with a strong religious foundation that stands them in good stead for the future. Good use is made of information communication technology in this curriculum area.

A range of teaching strategies are utilised including good, defined use of education for personal relationships to support appropriate links with the schools personal, health, social and religious education programmes, particularly in dealing with social and moral issues. These programmes cover the Education for Personal Relationships aspect of the curriculum about which parents were also highly complementary. Parents appreciate the school's 'open door' policy which they feel ensures that they can raise issues promptly and as a result they are quickly resolved. They are provided with enough information about the religious education curriculum through regular religious education newsletters and both formal and informal contact with the school to enable them to support their children's religious education at home. Creative cross curricular links with other subjects, particularly literacy, art and music, are used very effectively to consolidate learning and support understanding of religious education topics. As a consequence pupils enjoy their work and participate fully in lessons.

As the school reported, *'We consider that the multitude of ways in which the religious education curriculum is imparted to the children and the contribution it makes to the faith journeys of each of us in the community, child or adult, confirms that we are outstanding in this area'.*

Come and See has been established as a new scheme since June 2013. Specific termly topics enhance learning, raising awareness of what it is to live as a Catholic. Pupils will study Judaism and Islam as religions to compare with their own; the latter consciously chosen for its high profile relevance to 21st century living, with a need to fully appreciate the similarities and differences of the faith journeys of Muslims alongside our own. Classroom focal points are of a very high standard with both consistency of approach and individuality of content. Displays around the school are likewise of a very high standard and content. The school has established a delightful tradition of retaining pupils' religious education workbooks as they progress through the school. These are presented back to Year 6 pupils as they leave which pupils spoke about with anticipation and enthusiasm.

Grade 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education

Leadership and management of religious education were deemed to be outstanding at the last inspection and remain so. The coordinator has strong subject knowledge and she ensures that there is clear direction for staff through the subject policy, aims and targets. She supports staff and is always on hand to give advice when needed.

The coordinator has an excellent working relationship with the local Parish Priest and chaplain, both of whom work closely with her fostering the ongoing development of parish school links. She works hard to maintain religious education as a true core subject which retains its high profile. She keeps her subject knowledge up to date through attendance at courses and conferences on a regular basis and secures continued professional development for all staff, as appropriate. The coordinator undertakes religious education book scrutiny. She gives advice on class displays and often leads by example, putting up displays in keeping with the liturgical year. Class masses and weekly assemblies are co-ordinated by her.

The school has adopted an effective team based approach to religious education that ensures the subject is given an appropriate status at senior management level. Opportunity is provided for the coordinator to present to governors, as a part of a cycle of subject reviews, progress of this subject. At every opportunity she works hard to ensure that every child has involvement in liturgies and assemblies, ensuring all feel involved. The school endeavours to work closely with other Catholic schools in the combined deanery of Epsom and Redhill, sharing good practice and discussing ways forward. A high level of personal commitment from staff, at all levels ensures the centrality of faith journey to all aspects of school life, with gospel values being firmly rooted in policy and practice.

Standards of achievement are high, as data and the children's work demonstrate. Thorough processes of monitoring of standards of teaching and learning ensure high outcomes, with rigorous attention to assessment supporting the driving up of standards. The school's religious education 'Handbook' and 'Church as a Resource' documents were the coordinators initiative and have established a model of good practice ensuring quality of delivery and continuity with regular work sampling, lesson observations and related CPD ensuring ongoing evaluation is intrinsic.

The subject leader provides very strong and able subject leadership for religious education and is highly respected for her leadership and impact on the worshipping community at St Joseph's as evidenced by her extensive knowledge and understanding of the faith and religious education. She demonstrates a personal commitment to prayer and worship that in turn permeates the school community. She is a good role model and exemplar teacher who supports others in their own faith journeys and in their teaching. She is highly organised, as demonstrated by her well-presented documentation and preparation for inspection. She ensures that staff are readily able and resourced to deliver the religious education curriculum and she supports new staff very well. The staff share and deliver the school's vision for religious education.

Grade 1