



Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

INSPECTION REPORT

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Linkfield Lane ,Redhill RH1 1DU

Telephone:01737 765373

e-mail address: head@stjosephs-redhill.surrey.sch.uk

D/ES Number: 936/3916

Headteacher: Mrs Elizabeth Walsh
Chair of Governors: Mr Jason Sawyer

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 26 January 2009
Date of previous inspection: 21 June 2005

Reporting Inspector: Mrs M Hughes
Associate Inspector: Mrs B Brech

Description of School

St Joseph's is a large Catholic Primary School. It is part of a federation with a cluster of local schools and is heavily over subscribed. There are currently 420 pupils on roll between the ages of 4 and 11, 98% of whom are Catholic. The mission of the school is to promote "a calm, holy place where we pray, think and celebrate God's word". St Joseph's serves the four parishes of St Joseph's, Redhill, The Holy Family, Reigate, St Teresa of the Child Jesus, Merstham and Holy Family, Horley. Around 75% of pupils are White British and there is a large group from other European countries, particularly, Portugal, Spain and Italy. A growing number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. A small proportion of pupils have learning difficulties, most often related to their language needs. The staff comprises 13 full time teachers and 9 part time teachers, half of whom are Catholic and three of whom hold the CCRS qualification. 10% of the timetable is devoted to religious education at Key Stages 1 and 2.

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 is outstanding as a Catholic school, having a coherent sense of mission and purpose. The drive to develop the whole child and to nurture individual worth is embedded in school culture. Within a strong Catholic ethos, pupils are encouraged to strive for excellence in all areas of their academic and personal development. They, in response, learn to respect all members of the community as equally valuable, so relationships in the school are excellent. The strong sense of spirituality, enhanced by the school's prayer life and by the highly supportive work of the chaplain and parish priest, is matched by the dynamic partnership with parents and parishes. With the strong systems of care, support and guidance, these all promote outstanding spiritual, moral and social development in the pupils. The headteacher provides strong leadership to highly efficient senior managers and to a cohesive staff team who work exceedingly well together to provide good teaching and learning in religious education. Pupils make good progress because a well planned curriculum meets their different needs and consistently good teaching challenges their thinking. This is underpinned by effective systems for assessing pupils' attainment, which will be enhanced by procedures to track individual progress against targets, so that any underachievement can be identified and addressed. Governors provide outstanding support and conscientiously monitor the Catholic life of the school. With all leaders they engage in rigorous and accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and priorities for development.

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

Excellent progress has been made in all areas of the school's Catholic life, because it is kept constantly under review through prioritisation in the school development plan. Since the last inspection, the mission statement has been reviewed with the whole school community, so that all understand the Gospel values that underpin life in St Joseph's. The subject leader has observed teaching and enhanced her monitoring role. She has ensured that teachers plan for pupil self assessment and that they use marking to support the process. Consequently pupils know how to improve their work.

Progress has been made in the planning of challenging activities for more able pupils and further development of such opportunities should lead to higher levels of attainment.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

All in the school are open to new ideas and work together to generate development. Such strong teamwork and shared commitment to its future ensure that the school has excellent capacity for yet further improvement.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

Build on the assessment process by developing the newly established systems for tracking pupil progress. Use the information to set challenging targets, so that all pupils achieve appropriately and attainment is raised.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

Leaders at all levels are strongly focussed on the school's Catholic mission, so that the pupils' personal achievement and well being are at the very heart of its nurturing Christian ethos. The mission statement "Living, learning and laughing together in the light of God's love" underpins all areas of school life and reflects a commitment to develop the unique potential of every pupil, within a happy atmosphere. All leaders work together to promote an inclusive community in which the dignity of the individual is valued. This makes a positive impact on the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, which is outstanding. Governors provide excellent support and are proactive in evaluating provision and identifying areas for development. Through their liaison with subject leaders and through their "Governor of the month" visits, they effectively fulfil their role in monitoring the Catholic life of the school. They engage in critical and constructive dialogue with the headteacher as she shapes clear direction for the school. A strong, sensitive leader herself, the headteacher encourages and builds leadership capacity in all staff and so has created a strong, unified team who share her vision for the school. The deputy headteacher and senior staff contribute fully to the school's thorough and incisive evaluation of its work. They readily embrace new initiatives and are open to change. Very effective systems are in place to serve all pupils with the care, guidance and support they need to achieve well. A coherent management structure ensures excellent care for any pupil experiencing difficulty with learning or language, through a process of individual provision mapping. The special needs and pastoral care team, supplemented by a counsellor from the Valley Trust, ensures that the needs of all pupils are addressed sensitively, in line with the mission statement. One of the school's most notable strengths is its openness to the views of parents. Communication is excellent and parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One expressed the view of many with the words: "I think this school is fantastic. It is a real community, like a family. Its strong Catholic ethos means that everyone feels welcome and is encouraged to work together." Parents also praise the positive liaison with the local parishes, listing the many shared events that strengthen the links and help to develop a cohesive community. The school works conscientiously to support Catholic education in the Deanery and the Diocese, being actively involved in training new teachers and in succession planning.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

Prayer and collective worship are seen as essential elements of religious experience and as integral to the life of this happy community. Assemblies and liturgies are planned to relate directly to the pupils' own lives and support the "Here I Am" programme and the liturgical year. They all follow a common structure so pupils understand the liturgical form of gathering, listening, responding and going forth. In this way pupils are invited to become personally involved, thus enabling them to grow in their faith. Their many talents are celebrated through music, song and drama, engaging those of all abilities. Separate key stage assemblies ensure that the content is age appropriate and relates directly to the needs of the pupils. Evidence of this was observed as two exceptionally well prepared acts of collective worship, based on the Sunday Gospel, addressed the call to be "Fishers of Men". Pupils in Key Stage 1 were encouraged to identify ways in which they could follow Jesus, like being kind and honest, while those in Key Stage 2 enjoyed a slide presentation as they reflected on people who might inspire them to make the world a better place. In both cases, pupils were encouraged to see the significance of the Gospel in their own lives. They responded thoughtfully and reverently in prayer and in very joyful song! Further opportunities for prayer are offered throughout the day, especially during religious education (RE) lessons. Teachers create a sacred space for prayer through playing quiet music and lighting candles to promote moments of reflection. Focal points for prayer and interactive RE displays strongly enhance provision, especially as pupils plan them to support the "Here I Am" topics on their own initiative. Staff work with the priests to ensure that liturgical provision is appropriate. Mass is celebrated regularly and involves the whole community. The chaplain and the parish priest greatly enhance the work of the school. By liaising with the subject leader, they reflect on the range of opportunities offered to the pupils, evaluate provision for prayer and support the teaching of the "Here I Am" topics. They make a positive impact on the liturgical and spiritual life of the community. The outstanding provision for prayer in the school contributes significantly to the spiritual and moral development of pupils. Spirituality is further enhanced by the whole curriculum as teachers encourage pupils to appreciate and respond to the wonder of creation through music, art and reflection in such quiet places as the memorial garden.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school promote community cohesion?

The headteacher and senior staff work within the school's mission to ensure that St Joseph's is a place where the gifts and talents of every person are celebrated. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those for whom English is an additional language, are very well integrated into this inclusive community. Diversity is welcomed as enriching the school's provision. Such initiatives as "Sharing Our World" and Geography Week offer opportunities for those of different cultures to share their national traditions. Relationships throughout the school are exceptionally strong. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on the wider consequences of their actions and they say that everyone gets along with each other. The Code of Conduct, agreed by the School Council, clarifies what good behaviour really looks like in practice. It enables pupils to reconcile and to show respect for the feelings of others. As they take on leadership roles, older pupils demonstrate a mature sense of responsibility and independence. They show a keen sense of justice and willingly help those who are more vulnerable, being particularly patient with those who find communication difficult. Their behaviour and personal development are outstanding. Provision for spiritual development reflects and respects personal identity, so that pupils pray easily together. They also enjoy learning about the beliefs of others. The RE programme, which includes the study of world faiths, encourages pupils in their understanding of how other faith traditions can enrich their own. The pupils themselves spoke about how they thought it important to understand and value what others believe, with one saying "We learn how to respect and trust all different people here." This was demonstrated during the Key Stage 1 assembly, when reference was made to the Chinese New Year and its significance for one of

the teachers. Strong links with the wider community also nurture cohesion and the partnership with the local special school enables integration of pupils with emotional and social needs. Liaison with other local schools is also strong, allowing pupils to engage in sporting activities, history trips and music events. While recognising their own good fortune, pupils show concern for those less fortunate than themselves and enthusiastically participate in a range of fundraising activities, such as Mission Together and CAFOD. They are also aware of more local concerns, inviting senior citizens to a Christmas tea party and taking part in many parish events. The Catholic ethos of the school is tangible as people from all groups are drawn into this cohesive community.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

On entry to school children's understanding and achievements are generally above national expectations and most have a positive experience of Church. Excellent care and provision in the Foundation Stage ensure that pupils settle well and acquire high levels of social development. They flourish in this nurturing environment where firm foundations for future learning about the faith are established. Throughout Key Stage 1, pupils make steady progress and by Year 2 most achieve standards that exceed national expectations. From an early age they are encouraged to ask "Big Questions", such as "If God created the world, who created God?" so higher order thinking skills are apparent. Throughout Years 3 to 6 pupils consolidate these skills and are keen to tackle new challenges. Most reach expected levels of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2, as shown by assessment data. However, pupils' oral responses and the Biblical knowledge they show during lessons demonstrate higher standards. They can make connections between their personal journeys through life and Jesus' life, as portrayed through the Mysteries of the Rosary. Excellent displays around the school show that they are clear too about how this relates to the liturgical year. Pupils show an ability to apply their learning to their own lives and social issues, demonstrating an awareness of the moral and spiritual dimensions of what they study. For example, they discussed how Joseph might have felt during the journey to Jerusalem when Jesus was lost and how other people feel when they leave their homes or lose someone they love. Despite the different languages spoken in the home many pupils are developing a good religious vocabulary. Their responses in lessons and liturgies demonstrate a high level of religious literacy. Pupils at all levels are enthusiastic about sharing their ideas during discussions and can explain their ideas coherently. Their exemplary behaviour and eagerness to learn underpin achievement in RE. Excellent support for pupils with learning difficulties and for those learning English enable them to make good progress. Rigorous tracking of individual pupil progress is not yet embedded in practice. This process would enhance achievement by identifying those who need further challenge. Given such opportunities, more able pupils could reach higher levels of attainment.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Teaching and learning are good in their impact on pupils' achievement. There are a number of outstanding features apparent in the teaching of RE. Very high expectations of behaviour, coupled with warm, supportive relationships, help to create a productive atmosphere in classrooms, where pupils are keen to work hard. Teachers use ICT and poetry, such as the "Footprints" poem to encourage broad based knowledge. They employ imaginative approaches to make learning interesting and this engages pupils and motivates them. "Talk partners" and "Freeze framing" were seen being used to very good effect, keeping pupils on task and promoting a lively pace to learning. Good questioning invites pupils to develop and reflect on their answers, by encouraging them to ask "Why?" This helps to develop the skills and

confidence needed for independent learning and encourages higher level thinking skills. Lessons are carefully planned to build on past knowledge and to be relevant to the pupils' abilities and interests. They are largely differentiated to challenge pupils at their own level, though opportunities for independent research are not widely available to the more able, thus preventing their achievement of higher standards. There has been a positive move to make learning intentions of every lesson more explicit to pupils, so that they fully understand what is expected of them. This has proved successful as pupils are beginning to engage in self evaluation of their work. Support assistants are used extremely well to encourage all pupils to make a full contribution to lessons. In some classes they assist in assessing pupils' achievement by recording oral responses during discussions. Teachers assess pupils' work in a variety of ways and keep comprehensive assessment portfolios. They confidently assess against levels of attainment, giving appropriate feedback to pupils, both orally and through marking their books. This enables pupils to identify what they must do to improve their work. At the moment, individual pupil progress is not tracked against personal targets so information is not used rigorously to identify under achievement. However, the school has identified this as the way forward and has planned for its implementation. Parents and carers are encouraged to become actively involved in religious education, with homework being used effectively to consolidate the partnership between home and school.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

A well-planned curriculum, based on the "Here I Am" programme, makes learning exciting and relevant for all pupils, regardless of their ability. It builds on the foundation of home and promotes the pupils' all round development by relating directly to their own experiences. With well targeted support all pupils, including those with learning and language difficulties, have full access to the curriculum. RE permeates the school day but 10% of the curriculum is devoted specifically to the subject, as directed by the Bishops' Conference. It is clearly fundamental to the expression of the school ethos. The programme for PHSE (personal, health and social education), which incorporates the SEAL materials, further strengthens this commitment to developing the Catholic life of the school. The whole curriculum contributes to the pupils' spiritual and moral development by encouraging self esteem and by preparing pupils to be good citizens in the future. Such initiatives as the News Books and the Big Question Books enable pupils to enquire and wonder about the world and their place in it. Creative cross curricular links, especially with ICT, art and drama make learning interesting and greatly enhance the quality of provision, as do the many after school activities. This rich curriculum is responsive to local circumstances and emphasises the need for communication between different groups of people. Visitors, such as theatre groups and speakers from other faith traditions, enhance the RE programme and strongly support community cohesion by encouraging an understanding of difference. Visits, such as adventure holidays, reinforce this acceptance of diversity. They also promote independence in pupils by offering them opportunities to reflect on their beliefs and to become aware of the demands of religious commitment on everyday life. The RE curriculum is very well resourced so that teachers have the books and artefacts needed to support teaching and learning. The library is particularly well stocked and accessible.

Grade 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The headteacher, governors and senior staff ensure that RE remains at the heart of the school. Together they are committed to the development of its Catholic life and to raising standards of teaching and learning. The subject leader works closely with the headteacher, who retains responsibility for liturgical development. Both ensure that whole school policies and procedures are implemented effectively. The recent review of the mission statement, with staff, governors and school community, has given clear direction to the Catholic life of St Joseph's and has

highlighted the prioritization of RE in development planning. All staff are involved in this annual process and help to set quantifiable targets, which are regularly evaluated. The subject leader exhibits excellent knowledge of the RE programme and models good practice. She supports teachers in their work and encourages them to reflect and evaluate their own learning. She monitors teaching and learning through lesson observations and scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work, giving feedback which motivates colleagues to continuous development. Being an excellent leader, she recognises the importance of ensuring that this process makes a positive impact on pupil attainment. To this end she shares the information with the deputy, who co-ordinates assessment and planning and places RE in a whole school context. Both have highlighted the need to further develop the assessment process and to track individual pupil progress. The chaplain and parish priest also play a key role in leading the curriculum, by supporting planning, participating in lessons and supporting teachers. An on-going programme of training, provided by the school and the Diocese, addresses the development needs of teachers and keeps them up to date with current thinking. Excellent use is made of all resources, including Diocesan advisers, to keep teaching and learning dynamic and innovative. The subject leader has contributed to the wider development of RE in the Diocese by participating in the development of assessment tasks, and so she brings new initiatives back to the school. Because all leaders work with a common purpose, RE and the Catholic life of the school are in constant renewal.

Grade 1