



Diocese of Westminster

INSPECTION REPORT

St Joseph's Catholic Infant School

Waverley Avenue, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 6TA

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DCSF Number: 304/3509

Headteacher: Mrs P. Gibney

Chair of Governors: Mr R. Rodgers

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: 5th November 2009
Date of previous inspection: 11th September 2006

Reporting Inspector: Mrs P. Brannigan

Description of School

St Joseph's is a two form entry infant school with nursery in the London Borough of Brent. The school serves the parishes St Joseph and St Erconwald in Wembley. There are currently 209 pupils on roll with a further 51 part-time in the nursery. About 90% of pupils are baptised Catholics with most of the remainder come from other Christian denominations. Attainment on entry to the school is below the national average. A high proportion of pupils, 28%, are identified as having special educational needs and four have statements. Pupils come from a very wide range of backgrounds and ethnic groups. About 78% have English as an additional language, some at an early stage of acquisition. A total of 29 languages are spoken in the school. There are 11 full time and 3 part time teachers in the school of whom 92% are Catholics. Nine teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS) qualification or equivalent. The children's version of the school's mission statement, 'Love one another. Be kind to everyone. Be a follower of Jesus. Forgive each other. Love never ends' is at the heart of the school and is known by the pupils. It is on display in all areas of the school. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities is available for pupils. These include breakfast and after school club. The school has achieved Active Mark, the Healthy Schools award and the Higher Level (Silver) Travel Plan

Guide 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 an outstanding school with a very strong Catholic ethos. Pupils make very good progress, teaching is good or outstanding and assessment is thorough. There are consistently high standards in religious education which is at the heart of the curriculum, well planned, monitored and evaluated. Prayer and worship underpin the Catholic life of the school. Pupil behaviour is very good. Pupils and parents speak very highly of their school and value the sense of community where everyone is valued. Pastoral care is excellent and is given high priority by all members of staff. There are very good links with both parishes through the support given to the school by the priests and governors. School and parishes work closely together through shared celebrations and support for global and local needs through charitable activities. Spiritual, moral and social development is very well addressed through religious education and other curriculum areas and permeates the wider life of the school. The headteacher, together with the associate headteacher, demonstrate excellent leadership of a Catholic community and they have shared their vision for high standards in every aspect of school life with everyone. They are ably supported by the religious education subject leader, all staff and governors.

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

The last Section 48 inspection in 2006, identified a need to moderate assessments to ensure levels given are known to be consistent and secure. Also, the school was asked to improve the progress of all learners by planning differentiated activities which challenge the more able and ensure success for learners of English as a Second language. Both areas have been very well addressed. The school has also implemented planned training to develop teachers' full understanding of the new assessment materials. Self evaluation is very well developed and is used to inform the School Improvement Plan which is a shared activity involving all members of the school community. There is a strong focus on provision for the most able, gifted and talented pupils and on collaborative learning. There is much evidence that the school constantly strives for improvement and places a strong emphasis on staff development at all levels.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school has an excellent capacity for improvement and development. There is a stable staff who demonstrates a high level of commitment to the Catholic ethos and high standards in religious education. Positive relationships between staff, pupils, parents and governors lead to a readiness to take on new ideas and initiatives. Recently the school has entered into a 'soft' federation with the adjacent junior school which is at present without a headteacher. This has led to an improved understanding in continuity and progression as well as shared expertise. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection and there is much evidence of support for new teachers. The headteacher and senior staff have instigated developments in the wider life of the school which focus on the 'Every Child Matters' initiative as it affects all aspects of the learning process. Curriculum areas are reviewed regularly as part of the school's self-evaluation process which involves all staff and governors. The governing body is experienced and members demonstrate a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The head teacher, associate headteacher and religious education subject leader ensure that religious education is taught and evaluated with the same rigour as other curriculum areas. The religious education budget is as high as other curriculum areas and resources are good. New staff are encouraged to undertake relevant training. This includes teaching assistants who play a key role in supporting pupils. The self-evaluation documentation is reviewed regularly by staff and governors and is up to date, well referenced and accurate.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

There are no major areas for development, however:

- The school should continue to provide staff with the opportunity for self-reflection and staff development and continue to develop current good practice in assessment.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The school is very well managed. There are strong links between the governing body, the headteacher and the associate headteacher who demonstrates excellent leadership of a Catholic community. They are ably supported by their senior leadership team and all staff. The school's Catholic ethos is evident in the excellent level of pastoral care and the trust between pupils and staff. Leaders identify opportunities to develop the Catholic life of the school which involve the whole community. The governing body includes members who know the community really well, have a wide range of expertise and who understand their role in promoting the Catholic identity of the school. A good programme for governor training is in place. Governors are involved in the self-evaluation process and monitor the Catholic life of the school. The parish priest from St Joseph's is on the governing body and is a frequent visitor to the school for a planned programme of liturgies. High expectations are part of the ethos of the school and there is a clear vision for good quality care and education which is shared by everyone. Opportunities for pupils to show leadership through the School Council are highly valued. Spiritual and moral development is promoted by all staff through religious education and other curriculum areas. Excellent relationships with home and parish are promoted effectively through meetings, newsletters, questionnaires day and invitations to school and parish events.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

Pupils are provided with very many opportunities to develop in the understanding and growth of their faith. Prayer and worship are carefully monitored to ensure that pupils access a rich and diverse prayer and liturgical life within the school. Prayer is integral to the life of the school and pupils are given time for meditation and reflection. Pupils are also given opportunities to write their own prayers and examples were seen during the inspection. The parish priest from St Joseph's visits the school for Masses and other liturgies. Families are invited to join pupils for celebrations throughout the year and value this opportunity to support their children's prayer life. Pupils play a part in the preparation of these liturgies and celebrations. School assemblies are of a very high quality often enhanced by gospel readings, singing, music and drama. During the inspection an assembly lead by the headteacher included a re-enactment by pupils of the story of the Good Samaritan which focused on the command. 'Love one another as I have loved you.' Excellent and enthusiastic singing was a strong feature of the assembly and pupils were keen to respond to questions. Each class has an attractive prayer table with pupils' work, prayers, age appropriate bibles, artefacts and pictures. A display of crucifixes from many countries in the entrance reflects the range of cultures represented by children in the school. The high quality of religious education displays using pupils' prayers and reflections which are prominent throughout the building emphasise the centrality of prayer and worship to the life of the school.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school promote community cohesion?

Community cohesion is a strength of the school. The whole community is very welcoming and fosters a strong sense of belonging. Leaders promote respect for difference, value cultural diversity and ensure equal opportunities for everyone. There are multicultural displays throughout the school and pupils are taught songs and hymns in different languages. Other faiths are well taught. A Jewish speaker talks to pupils about Judaism and the Hindu festival of Diwali is explored. Pupils are encouraged to show concern for the weak and vulnerable within and beyond their own community through fund raising for a range of charities including the Catholic Children's Society, Mission Together and CAFOD. There are excellent links with the adjacent junior school to which most pupils transfer at the end of Key Stage 1. Parents are encouraged to participate in the life of the school through the PA and helping with school trips. They value these opportunities to support their children. They also appreciate the range of social activities offered by the school. Partnership with the parishes is good and school premises and facilities are used for a range of activities. The school has also been involved in the wider community with the Travel plan, Walk on Wednesday, dance festival and participation in Black History Month. Work experience and teaching practice students are welcomed by the school. The good range of extra-curricular activities recognises the variety of interests and abilities in the whole school community and is appreciated by pupils and their families. Pupils also value the opportunities given to support the life of the school through the School Council.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Excellent progress is made by pupils and by the end of Year 2 standards meet or exceed diocesan expectations. Work is of a very good quality and it is evident that at least 10% of curriculum time is spent on religious education. Pupils' workbooks show evidence of coverage, differentiation and a wide range of activities. Written work is very well presented and marking is

positive and interactive. The assessment process enables staff to plan effectively and the school uses the new levels of attainment to level, target and plan ahead to meet the needs of individual children in religious education. The very good quality of education and current focus on assessment and tracking ensure that standards are likely to be maintained or improve further. The spiritual development of pupils is given a high priority and is rooted in the teachings and beliefs of the Catholic Church. Workbooks and conversations with pupils indicate that there are many opportunities for reflection on the links between the life and teachings of Jesus and their own lives. Behaviour is very good and pupils show respect for each other and themselves. The school provides an excellent atmosphere for social and moral education and conversations with pupils indicate that this has an impact on behaviour and attitudes demonstrated by a strong sense of service to each other. Parents and families are given opportunities to become involved in their children's religious education through newsletters, consultation meetings and questionnaires.

Grade 1

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is outstanding. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils. Lessons observed during the inspection were good or outstanding and enabled pupils to engage in interesting and challenging tasks. A Year 2 lesson on the theme of Friendship enabled pupils to explore ways to become a friend of Jesus. They did this by discussing ways of helping each other, families and the wider community, then moved on to scripture references. Small groups supported by teaching assistants ensured that all children could contribute. This was followed by a drawing and writing activity in which every child was able to engage at their own level. The lesson ended with a simple liturgy with prayers, singing and a short reflection. Lessons observed included good use of ICT and very well planned activities which challenged the most able pupils as well as supporting the learning of all groups within the class. Teaching assistants are very well used to support individuals and groups of children. Pupils respond to religious education lessons with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Written work is very good and well presented. Assessment is in place and marking is positive with interactive comments. Parents spoken to expressed a high level of satisfaction with the religious education provided by the school and the very good level of communication offered by all members of staff.

Grade 1

Quality of the Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. At least 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education which follows the 'Here I Am' programme. This is complemented by the SEAL PSHCE materials. Staff work hard to ensure the subject has a high priority and pupils' abilities and needs are taken into consideration when preparing lessons. Planning is in place and indicates that teachers are building on prior attainment and experiences. ICT is used very well and the school has a good range of resources in this area. The curriculum supports the personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and they are encouraged to use their talents to benefit the school and each other through the School Council. The very good quality of assemblies, liturgies and masses all help pupils to understand and value their faith, as does the good level of involvement with the parishes. All staff are encouraged and enabled to attend diocesan training which supports the religious education curriculum.

Grade 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education

There is very good leadership and management of religious education. The head teacher, together with the associate headteacher, supports the co-ordinator who is well informed and experienced. A very high profile is given to the subject. Senior staff have an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development as well as a clear vision for the faith life of the school. All teachers give a high priority to the subject and are enthusiastic and well-informed. Staff training is given a high priority and the co-ordinator supports new teachers and other members of staff when necessary. Religious education and the Catholic Life of the school are prominent and detailed in the School Improvement Plan. A tracking system enables staff to monitor pupils' progress in religious education and ensure that appropriate differentiated tasks are set. Teaching assistants are used very effectively to support pupils during lessons. Parents are well informed about current topics in religious education and enabled to support and explore faith with their children.

Grade 1