

INSPECTION REPORT

School: St Joseph's RC Primary School
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Headteacher: Mrs Barbara Porter
Chair of Governors: Father Ian Farrell

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

Date of inspection: April 2012
Date of previous inspection: May 2007
Reporting Inspector: Mrs Margaret Dolan

Information about the school

St Joseph's is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parishes of St Joseph's, Longsight and St Augustines, All Saints, Manchester. The area the school serves is in a regeneration area with high levels of deprivation. There are 210 pupils on roll with 37 in the nursery. 72% of the pupils are baptised Catholics. The children are from a range of ethnic groups the majority being from a Black African background. 21% are from a white British heritage and 58% of the children have English as an additional Language. 55% of the children are entitled to free school meals which is well above the national average. 55 children are on the special needs register and one child has a statement of special educational need.

There are 13 teachers of whom 10 (77%) are Catholic. 9 teachers have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Education or an equivalent qualification and 1 teacher will be beginning the course shortly.

Overall Effectiveness

Grade 2

St Joseph's is a good school with many outstanding features where pupils feel safe and cared for and parents are welcomed. The behaviour in the classrooms and around the school is excellent and the children are well motivated and keen to achieve high standards. The headteacher is justifiably very proud of the school and she has a strong vision of how she wishes the school to develop. In this she is ably supported by her senior management team and staff and by the very committed and supportive governors. There is a good partnership between school and parish and there are good relationships with parents. The school promotes inclusivity and a strength of the school is the integration of pupils from other cultures and the care and support they are given.

Capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

Capacity for sustained improvement at St Joseph's is outstanding. There is a very calm and peaceful atmosphere around the school and the children are very polite and welcoming.

The headteacher and Religious Education coordinator are keen to develop all aspects of the religious life of the school. The mission statement and the pupil friendly equivalent is central to everything that happens at St Joseph's. The school prayer is known by everybody and is displayed around the school. The words of the prayer are depicted in a series of murals on the main school corridor.

Strategies for the monitoring of teaching and learning are in place and regular classroom observations, as well as work scrutinies have been established. All work is assessed and annotated and a system of levelling children's work and recording results is developing.

What the school needs to do to improve further

The school needs to maintain the very high standards in the teaching and learning and also:

- 1. to develop assessment to include levelling and recording of pupils work**
- 2. to involve children more in the planning and preparation of assemblies**

PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups

Grade 2

St Joseph's is a good Catholic school. Children begin well below average and make good progress and are at least average by year 6. They are well prepared for their continuing education at high school. There is very good liaison with the high school and there are excellent links for both the pupils and staff which helps transition for Year 6.

Older pupils develop leadership qualities through responsibilities around the school. The children in Year 6 are partnered with a 'special friend' in reception class and a team of children have been trained to help with 'anti-bullying' and they wear red hats to make them visible in the playground. There is an active school council who have amongst other things suggested improvements for procedures in the dining room and have raised money for charity through a 'pyjama day.' Behaviour in the classrooms and around the school is excellent. The children are aware that any worries can be discussed with a member of staff and the children feel safe and secure. One child said, "My school makes me feel safe and happy," and another child said, "The teachers say nice things and always smile." There is an ECO team and many extra curricular activities including gardening, cooking and art clubs. There is a quiet room called the TH Inc room where children can go to relax and where play therapy takes place when needed.

There are weekly assemblies to which parents are invited. Awards are given for good behaviour and achievement. A child who is 'always' trying hard with behaviour and achievement is awarded the weekly Superstar Award and is allowed to wear a red superstar jumper all week. Children who behave well at lunchtime are given the opportunity of dining with the headteacher which is very popular and also helps develop relationships with children from other age groups. There is a house system with each house named after a saint. Assemblies are based on the liturgical year and are mainly staff initiated. This could be improved by giving more opportunities to the children to be involved with planning and preparation. Harvest, Advent, Lent and Easter celebrations

are shared with others through drama, music and prayer. There is an excellent school choir which enhances liturgical celebrations and also entertains members of the school community during the course of the year. The children also enjoy sharing these special events with the residents of St Joseph's Care Home which is near the school. Children are very aware of the needs of others and have developed a link with a community in Ghana. As well as exchanging information the children have raised over £2000 in their bottle aid collections to help fund the building of a new school. The children also raise funds for other local and national charities including Caritas and CAFOD.

The children from Year 1 to Year 6 attend Mass in turn on Tuesday mornings at St Joseph's Church with special masses at the beginning and end of the school year. Their commitment and excellent behaviour impressed the parishioners so much that they sent a very complimentary letter to the headteacher to be read to the children. Each class has a beautifully presented prayer area which is regularly changed to fit in with the church's year. In Reception class the display reminded the children that God's Love is Everywhere. The religious displays around the school are of an exceptionally high standard and include many examples of children's work. The Sacramental programme is organised by the Parish Priest who comes into school weekly specifically to work with the children in Year 3. The children in Key Stage 2 are also given a weekly opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in school. Days of prayer and reflection are organised at the Marist Centre for children from Year 3 and Year 6 and staff attend training there for different aspects of the religious life of the school. The prayer life of the school is very good including opportunities for traditional and personal prayer. An act of collective prayer observed on inspection in Year 2 considered how we bring the light of Jesus to other people. The children sat quietly in a circle in a darkened room and thought about how they could pass on the light of Jesus to their families and people they meet. Suggestions included sharing smiles and hugs and also making a card or helping in the house. The room was gradually lightened with each comment and then after a short reading a small candle was lit from a big candle to remind us that Jesus light never goes out.

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

Grade 2

Provision for Catholic Education at St Joseph's is good. Teaching and learning is at least good with examples of outstanding practice. Learners make very good progress and the children are very proud of the work in their books. Marking is generally good and different genres and styles are used in their written work. Differentiation is evident in written tasks and activities and children with special education needs are well supported by a committed team of support staff and teaching assistants. There is a shared commitment to improving attainment and achievement. Scrutiny of work by the headteacher and Religious Education coordinator shows that the children have a good understanding of the topics taught. Planning is effective and progress is monitored. Portfolios of work and assessments show good progress in Religious Education although this could be improved through levelling the work and recording children's progress more formally. The Way, The Truth and

The Life Religious Education scheme adopted by the diocese has been used throughout the school since 2002. Members of staff have attended training and purchased a variety of resources to support the Religious Education curriculum.

In a good lesson observed in Year 1, after recalling the events of Holy Week the children considered how the disciples felt after the death of Jesus. The children split into groups to re-enact what happened in the Upper Room and then prepared questions they would have liked to ask Jesus. In Year 5 the children were thinking of how we know that Jesus is amongst us in different ways. The lesson was very good with good pace and the children were very alert and keen to take part in the discussion. The lesson finished by referring to the words of St Francis and asking how we can be instruments of peace. Understanding that Peter was chosen to be the leader of the church was considered in a good lesson by the Year 4 children and how this reminds us of our own responsibilities. The children were able to find bible references quickly and they used these to consider what Jesus asked Peter to do. A very good lesson in Reception class looked at new beginnings and new life. Excellent use was made of the chicks in the room and a short presentation on the whiteboard reminded the children about the life cycle of the chicken. The teacher was very enthusiastic and the teaching assistants were very involved and made positive comments to include the all children in the discussion.

There are a large number of children from other cultures and faiths and these children are well integrated into the life of the school. Parents are aware that their children can be withdrawn from Religious Education and Collective Worship but no requests have been made. Respect is shown to the different children's backgrounds. In the spring term the school holds an international week to increase the children's knowledge of other world religions. This is enriched even further by parents from different cultural backgrounds who contribute to this popular week.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School

Grade 2

St Joseph's school is very well lead by a dedicated and committed headteacher, her senior leadership team and staff and a very able governing body. The governors are aware of the religious life of the school through the headteacher reports to governors and a written report from the Religious Education coordinator. The mission statement is regularly reviewed and a 'child-friendly' version has been written with the help of the pupils to increase understanding and ownership. Governors are also involved in diocesan, local authority and school training and will be attending a day of reflection with the school staff. The governors are very supportive but are willing to question aspects of school life and act as critical friends. They are regularly updated on changes in Religious Education and were informed about the new inspection

format and the developments of The Way, The Truth and The Life. New applicants for teaching roles in the school are recruited with care and rigour and existing staff are encouraged to develop their own spiritual and professional journeys. Governors are regular visitors in school and attend many school events. At a recent parent's evening the governors talked to parents and gave out a questionnaire about the life of the school.

The Headteacher and Religious Education coordinator ensure high standards through consistency in planning and monitoring. There are regular classroom observations, book scrutinies and discussions with pupils. Work is well planned and assessed and the school is developing assessment to include recording of pupils levels of achievement. Children are encouraged to question and reflect and older children become enthusiastically involved in discussion and debate to increase their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic Faith. The Parish Priest, who is also Chair of Governors, is a regular and welcome visitor to the school and is keen to strengthen links with parents and welcome them into the parish.

There are good relationships between parents, pupils and school staff. Parents are aware that they can talk to teachers informally and formally at the regular parents evenings held in school. New parents to nursery are given a welcome pack with all the school information to help them to integrate into the the life of the school. There is a good relationship between the nursery staff and parents. School events and celebrations are well supported by parents who feel welcome and involved. Regular newsletters are sent to parents to keep them involved in the life of the school and there is a texting service to remind them of forthcoming events. Curriculum topic sheets are also sent home. A website is being developed to give parents instant access to school information.

The community room in the school is well used and is a way of welcoming parents and people in the locality into the school. Senior members of the parish use the room each week to meet together for refreshments and a chat and English lessons are given for new families in the area who have English as an additional language. The room is also used as a quiet place for parents who need to complete college work and as somewhere to meet with the school nurse and other related services or to wait for children.