



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Inspection Report



Name of School: St Joseph's School
LEA: Thurrock Unitary Authority
Inspection Date: 9th May 2017
Reporting Inspector: Pamela Brannigan

This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of School: Primary
School Category: Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils: 4 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 256
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: March 2012

School Address:
Scrattton Road
Stanford-Le-Hope
Essex
SS17 0PA

Tel. No. 01375 672217
Headteacher: Miss R. Saul
Chair of Governors: Mrs J. Risby

Information about the school

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Stanford le Hope, Essex is part of the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parish of Our Lady and St Joseph with some pupils coming from farther afield. There are currently 256 pupils aged 4-11 on roll and the school is moving towards one form entry. The majority of pupils are of White British Heritage with 19% coming from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Around 60% of pupils are Catholics with the remainder coming from other Christian denominations, other faiths or none. 50% of the teachers are Catholics and two have the CCRS qualification. The proportion of pupils with special needs is below the national average.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

St Joseph's is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. These include the quality of the prayer and collective worship provided by the school and the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from its Catholic life. The Catholic ethos is evident in the daily life of the school with prayer and worship being central to its work. Pupils are given opportunities for spiritual and moral development through the curriculum and the wider life of the school. The quality of pupils' learning and progress in religious education is good as are the standards of attainment. There is regular monitoring of teaching, learning, and assessment. Many governors are of long standing who know the school well and offer an excellent level of support. Pastoral care is good and shared by the local parish priest, governors and all staff. Relationships within the school and with the local parish are very good and pupils feel well cared for and supported in their learning. Parents are generally happy with the Catholic life of the school although a significant number would like more information about the religious education curriculum and homework.

The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement. The last inspection in 2013 identified three areas for development: to provide pupils with further opportunities to advance their learning rapidly; to include comments in workbooks to encourage pupils' learning; to develop the role of teaching assistants to enable them to support pupils' learning more effectively. The first has been addressed by including three challenges in each lesson which gives every pupil an opportunity to achieve well. The second has been to revise marking across the school to give pupils verbal rather than written feedback. The third has been addressed by enabling teaching assistants to become more familiar with the religious education curriculum. Since then a new headteacher has been appointed and there have been a number of staff changes. The deputy headteacher who will shortly become head of school is also religious education subject leader. She has produced a comprehensive action plan to sustain effectiveness and put in place further improvements. She also gives guidance to teachers on classroom worship which involves pupils in using their own prayers as well as the traditional prayers of the Church. Regular, rigorous monitoring is ensuring that teaching is relevant and appropriate to children's needs.

The quality of self-evaluation is good. The school documentation is accurate and gives a comprehensive analysis of the Catholic life of the school and religious education. There are strategies in place to share good practice and support new teachers. The curriculum which follows the 'Come and See' programme enables pupils to make connections between faith and their own lives. Staff are encouraged to improve their skills through training and embarking on the CCRS course. There are also good links with other deanery primary schools through in-service sessions and staff meetings. All new teachers are given guidance in assessment and levelling pupils' work.

The current leadership has a good capacity to maintain effectiveness. The headteacher shows good leadership of a Catholic community and is well supported by his deputy. Governors have a wide range of expertise and a very good knowledge of the everyday life of the school. They visit frequently and are involved in staff appointments as well as liaising with subject leaders. Initiatives are in place which are leading to good outcomes for all pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement the areas identified in the religious education action plan.
- Improve the level of information for parents to enable them to have a better understanding of the religious education curriculum.
- Plan for assessment without levels across the year groups.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 2

Pupil achievement and progress in religious education are good. Most pupils spoken to said they enjoy religious education and this is borne out by pupil surveys. Pupils observed during the inspection worked well together and were keen to achieve. They have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and abilities. Lessons observed were well planned with a range of cross curricular activities. In Early Years pupils made streamers to celebrate Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit. In Key Stage 1 they identified a range of Holy Days and explored their significance and what they could learn from the life of St Joseph. In Years 5 and 6 pupils used the 'Road to Emmaus' scripture passage to explore the concept of empathy and the emotions felt by the disciples who didn't recognise Jesus until he revealed his identity. Across the school workbooks are well presented and verbal comments help pupils make the 'next steps' in their learning. Other faiths are taught well through the 'Come and See' religious education programme. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards of attainment meet diocesan expectations and all groups make good progress. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of individuals and groups of pupils. School leadership gives religious education the same importance as other core subjects and uses staff meeting time and in-service sessions to support teachers.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They respond well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. Pupils often suggest charities they wish to support and these have included Cafod, Catholic Children's Society as well as famine relief appeals. They also collect items for the local foodbank and have a good understanding of the work of these charities. Pupils are able to link this with the life and teachings of Jesus. They are given responsibilities to support the life of the school as school council members, zone managers, dinner hall helpers and playground buddies. There are also plans to involve pupils in a 'Mini Vinnies' group. There are very good links with the local parish with regular school Masses when pupils act as altar servers, readers and offertory takers. The parish priest who provides pastoral support for staff and pupils comes in frequently and acts as an additional teaching resource. Pupils benefit from the employment of a counsellor from Brentwood Catholic Children's Society. The school also supports individual pupils through interventions including a 'Good to be me' group as well as provision for those who find lunchtimes difficult. Pupils show consideration and respect for adults and each other. Behaviour is very good and pupils value the sense of security, friendship and community created within the school. Pupils are aware of the support available to them and feel safe, cared for and know where to go when they need help

Prayer and collective worship are an integral part of school life. Pupils understand the importance of prayer and participate readily in class and assemblies. The cycle of celebrations reflects the Church's liturgical year and enables pupils to understand how faith links to everyday experiences. They respond positively to opportunities to develop their faith journey through reflective prayer. Pupils are involved in the preparation for Masses and assemblies and have a good grasp of religious terminology appropriate to their ages. They learn the traditional prayers of the Church as well as writing their own prayers, many of which were seen during the inspection. There is a 'Jesus and Me' after school club where pupils reflect on bible stories and join in related activities. The club is very popular and over-subscribed. Pupils are familiar with traditional devotions including the Rosary. There are plans to give pupils more responsibility in selecting readings for class worship. Preparation for the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation in Year 3 are parish based with support from the school.

Leaders and managers

Grade 2

The headteacher and his deputy demonstrate good leadership of the school through the way they promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for its Catholic life. They communicate a clear Catholic vision to the whole community and are supported in this by staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. The Catholicity of the school is evident in displays around the school and in the classroom prayer areas. During the inspection a Year 3/4 Mass in the parish church involved pupils as welcomers, servers and readers. Singing was excellent and all pupils participated with enthusiasm. The local parish priest took the opportunity to reflect on the life of Mary as the Mother of the Church. These masses are a regular feature of school life and parents are invited to attend. The headteacher's weekly bulletin for parents always includes aspects of Catholic life.

Many school governors have a long standing knowledge and understanding of the school and are well informed about its life through the headteacher's report and visits to school events as well as meetings with senior leaders. Along with the headteacher they monitor the school's provision for prayer and worship as well

as religious education. They have accessed training provided by the diocese which has enabled them to evaluate aspects of the religious life of the school and to challenge and support effectively.

As subject leader, the deputy headteacher has produced an action plan for religious education and is well placed to support new teachers. She monitors religious education through workbook scrutiny, observing teaching and evaluating outcomes. She gives feedback after lesson observations resulting in improvements in teaching and learning. She has led training sessions for staff to help them ensure that all pupils achieve well. She also presents information to the governing body to enable them to evaluate provision and development. Assessment is in place and tasks enable pupils to demonstrate their knowledge of the relevant concepts. Leaders support staff development and teachers are encouraged to undertake further training.

School leaders ensure that St Joseph's is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. The school offers a range of extra-curricular activities and participates in local community events. There are good links with other diocesan schools including the Catholic secondary schools to which many pupils transfer at the end of Key Stage 2. Provision for spiritual development ensures that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences. Parents are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress through regular meetings although a number would welcome more information about the religious education curriculum and homework.

Provision

Grade 2

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. During the inspection, lessons observed were good or better. Pupils are given a good start in Early Years which is built upon as they progress through the school. Lessons are planned with clear learning intentions and a range of activities. All groups of pupils make good progress and behaviour for learning is also good. Teachers respond well to pupils' comments and take opportunities to extend knowledge and develop understanding. In most year groups well differentiated tasks enable pupils to work with enthusiasm and interest. However, older pupils would benefit from more opportunities to use their bibles when studying scripture. Good support by teaching assistants is a feature of many lessons. Pupils are informed about ways to improve their work. There is every indication that current good standards are likely to be maintained.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is good. Across the school 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The programme 'Come and See' has been implemented throughout the school and is now embedded. It is enhanced by participation in the Deanery Mass and an annual retreat day for Year 6 pupils. The programmes 'Journey in Love' and 'All that I am' supports the Sex and Relationships policy and is shared with parents. The local parish priest and two Sisters of Mercy also talk to pupils about vocations and are frequent visitors to the school. There are good quality resources including items to support role play. In recent years the school has included examples of classical religious art to stimulate thought and discussion when studying scripture. These form a part of religious education displays around the school which emphasise the importance of faith to the work of the community. The curriculum enables pupils to become aware of their responsibility for each other and their environment. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development.

Provision for prayer and worship at St Joseph's is outstanding. Assemblies and liturgies are well planned and contribute to pupils' spiritual development. They include visual presentations, Bible readings, drama, singing and music. Pupils are involved in collective worship in their classrooms and are given opportunities for personal reflection. Each classroom has a prayer focus with religious artefacts and a display board which often includes children's work. There are plans to establish a school chapel space to support activities including meditation and reflection. Feast day Masses are celebrated throughout the year and the traditions of the Church are explored with pupils. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to many celebrations and pupils visit the local church to lead a Carol Service at Christmas. The parish priest supports the school through Masses and classroom visits. Pupils have the opportunity to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation at Advent and Easter.

The school is constantly seeking to develop practice to improve outcomes for pupils. The subject leader is reviewing procedures to prepare the school for assessment without levels. Tracking of pupils' progress provides a clear picture of progress in both key stages. There is evidence that good outcomes for pupils are likely to be maintained or improved as the school consolidates and builds on current good practice.

The inspector would like to express her thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.