



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

LEA: Essex

Inspection Date: 19th April 2016

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: 193
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: 5th March 2007

School Address:
Trinity Square
South Woodham Ferrers
Essex
CM3 5JX

Tel. No. 01245 321828
Headteacher: Mr A. Name
Chair of Governors: Mr A. Name

Information about the school

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is a one form entry voluntary aided school in South Woodham Ferrers, Essex and part of the diocese of Brentwood. It occupies a site with an Anglican school and the shared parish church. The school serves the parishes of South Woodham Ferrers and Danbury. There are currently 193 pupils aged 4-11 on roll. The proportion of Catholic pupils is 51% with 26% coming from other Christian denominations. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is around the national average.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Joseph's' is an outstanding school which is highly effective in providing Catholic education, ensuring excellent outcomes for pupils and providing leadership which gives a clear sense of purpose and direction. Pupils are given many opportunities for spiritual and moral development which are part of the provision for religious education, prayer and collective worship. Senior leaders are excellent role models and the Catholicity of the school is evident in all aspects of its work. There is a clear focus on reviewing provision and improving resources as well as putting in place robust systems for teaching, learning, assessment and monitoring. Pastoral care is very good and shared by all members of the school community. Pupils enjoy school and appreciate opportunities given to be involved in all aspects of school life. Parents praise the high standard of education and the good level of communication. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' standards of attainment often exceed diocesan expectations.

The school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement. The last inspection in 2011 identified no specific areas for development other than those already noted in the school improvement plan. Since then the experienced headteacher who is also executive headteacher at another Catholic school has put in place systems to enhance the Catholic life of the school and ensure good outcomes for all groups of pupils. Accurate assessment and careful tracking have led to high standards of attainment in religious education. There are currently plans for joint moderation of pupils' work with another Catholic school to further improve staff assessment skills. The subject leader has an excellent understanding of her role and is well placed to support colleagues. The school gives a high profile to religious education and has effective strategies to share good practice with new staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement those areas identified in the action plan for religious education.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Attainment and progress in religious education are outstanding. Pupils achieve high standards and work with interest and commitment. Pupils spoken to said they enjoy their religious education lessons and appreciate the wide range of tasks involved. Behaviour for learning is excellent and pupils are eager to participate in activities and work well together whether in groups or pairs. Pupils can work independently and use research skills to extend their understanding. They have a very good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their ages and are able integrate religious ideas into their own lives. Workbooks are very well presented, show coverage of the curriculum and indicate very good progress made by all groups. Standards of attainment are in line with or exceed with diocesan expectations.

Pupils make an exceptionally good contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They respond very well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. They are keen to take on responsibilities including membership of the School Council and as Play Leaders. A large group of Year 6 pupils work as the Religious Education Pupil Leadership Team. They are responsible for leading and preparing liturgies, assemblies, Mass and prayer services. During the inspection they prepared and led a liturgy for Key Stage One pupils linked to the Year of Mercy which involved the younger pupils and included prayers, drama, music and singing. Each class nominates a charity for which pupils fund raise through a special event. In addition, many local, national and

international charities are supported throughout the year including the British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research and Cafod. Pupils understand that the teachings of Jesus underpin their response to the needs of others. The school also enables pupils to reach out to the local community through visits to local care homes and participation in the town Carol Service. Links with the secondary school to which most pupils transfer are very good. Pupils are thoughtful, courteous, care for their school and each other. They are able to apply aspects of Jesus' life and teaching to their own lives and understand that a sense of service is part of being a member of a Catholic community. They also value the sense of community and belonging created within the school.

Pupils respond very positively to opportunities to participate in the school's collective worship. They are eager to take part in assemblies and lead class prayers. They regularly prepare and lead worship with confidence and enthusiasm. Pupils have a good understanding of the liturgical year with its seasons and celebrations. They are able to pray in different ways and at different times. They use scripture, the traditional prayers of the church, meditation, reflection and their own prayers, examples of which were seen during the inspection through the class prayer books compiled by pupils throughout the year. Rosary groups are held in May and October and all classes join in the Angelus at noon. Lenten Reconciliation services and the Stations of the Cross are part of the school's preparation for Easter as well as a production for parents and parish. Pupils participate with reverence and commitment in parish based masses as servers, readers, offertory and choir.

Pastoral care is very good and given a high priority by staff and governors who work closely together to promote the spiritual development of pupils and the Catholic life of the community. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and know where to go when they need support. A dedicated worker from Brentwood Catholic Children's Society supports vulnerable children and families on a weekly basis. Pupils value being in a friendly environment where they are listened to and encouraged to help each other. Parents value the care given to their children, the quality of education and the approachability of staff.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

School leaders and governors are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. The headteacher supported by senior staff demonstrates excellent leadership of the school through the way she promotes the provision for the Catholic life of the school. She has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development which she shares with the whole school community. Governors support her in this and are committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. The development of Catholic life is seen as central to all that happens and gospel values underpin all decision making. There is a strong commitment both to improve in all aspects of education and to provide high quality care for pupils. Together the headteacher and subject leader have a very good knowledge of areas for development in religious education and are well placed to support colleagues.

The senior leadership team have a clear vision for the Catholicity of the school and the central place of prayer, worship and religious education. Senior leaders are very good role models and all staff are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and improve their skills through meetings and attendance at diocesan led training. The subject leader offers extra support for pupils who do not attend Sunday Mass to enable them to be familiar with the church building and the significance of various features.

Senior leaders monitor religious education by means of lesson observations, work scrutiny and joint planning which is followed by feedback to individual teachers. The school has put in place strategies to give further challenge to the ablest children. Regular sessions for staff development ensures teachers are secure and confident in their delivery of the 'Come and See' religious education programme. Planning includes teaching assistants who play a key role in the school. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and seven of them have the CCRS qualification.

Governors work closely with senior leadership and have a good understanding of strengths and areas for development. They are well informed about the life of the school through the headteacher's report, meetings with subject leaders and frequent visits. They also attend staff training days linked to religious education and attend an annual retreat day. The parish priest in his role as link governor for religious education conducts observations of all aspects of the school's religious life along with

members of the senior leadership team. Governors have an excellent understanding of their role and are well placed to challenge and support.

Leaders ensure that the school is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. Diversity is celebrated and pupils are taught to respect other Christian denominations and faiths. Talks from visiting speakers and visits to other places of worship ensure pupils have a good understanding of the diversity of belief in modern life linked to British values. Pupils are given exceptionally good opportunities to develop a sense of service and show compassion for others through charitable fund raising and involvement in the local community. Opportunities for spiritual development ensure that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences and link them to the life and teachings of Jesus. Parents appreciate the good level of contact with the school. They are invited to many school events and are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress through regular meetings and reports. Curriculum letters include the religious education being taught and weekly newsletters feature the Sunday gospel for parents' information. There are currently plans to give parents more opportunities to evaluate the school's provision for religious education and Catholic life.

Provision

Grade 1

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is excellent. During the inspection lessons observed were good or better. Teachers are well aware of their pupils' capabilities and plan their lessons with a range of differentiated activities to enable all groups to make good progress. Lessons are planned with clear learning intentions and an interesting range of activities. High quality resources including up to date technology are used effectively to motivate pupils and build on previous learning. In all classes observed pupils worked with interest and made good progress. Teachers respond very well to pupils' comments and take opportunities to develop understanding. Higher order questioning was a feature of many lessons observed. The effective use of teaching assistants particularly at Foundation Stage is a strength of the school. Marking is positive, interactive and includes suggestions of ways to improve. Pupils' self-assessment in their 'Respond' booklets show they have a good understanding of concepts taught. Good assessment, planning and tracking supports the learning and progress of all groups of pupils.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is excellent. The school's religious education policy gives clear guidelines as to how the subject should be delivered. The requirements of the Bishop's conference and the diocese are fully met and at least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. This is demonstrated by the budget devoted to it and the current level of resources. Each class has a saint who is a focus for the qualities valued by the Church. In addition, a bible story is studied in depth over the term which enhances pupils' knowledge of scripture. Religious education displays around the school emphasise the centrality of faith to the work of the community. The 'Come and See' programme is enhanced by cross curricular links and use of Cafod resources. Links with schools in India and Tanzania assists in developing understanding of other cultures. 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. The support given to families through a range of extra-curricular activities gives a strong sense of community to the school. There is every indication that current high standards are likely to be maintained or improved.

Collective worship at St Joseph's is central to the life of the school. Assemblies and liturgies include pupils in the planning and contribute greatly to their spiritual development. They often include visual presentations, bible readings drama, singing and music. Pupils are involved in collective worship in their classrooms as well as class Masses and are given opportunities for personal reflection. Each classroom has a prayer focus with religious artefacts and display boards which include religious vocabulary and children's work. Masses and age appropriate liturgies are celebrated in school and church throughout the year. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to many celebrations. The priest from the local parish is a frequent visitor and supports the school through Masses and liturgies as well as acting as chaplain on an informal basis. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their knowledge of Catholic traditions and there is an annual retreat day for year 6 pupils. Parents are frequently invited to Masses and other forms of collective worship. There are strong parish links through the First Holy Communion programme and pupils' involvement in Sunday Mass.

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.