

INSPECTION REPORT

St Joseph's RC Primary School, Limes Avenue, Darwen, Lancashire. BB3 3SG

Inspection date 30th March 2017

Reporting Inspector Mr J Thorpe and Mr A Sowerby

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Primary
URN	119667
Age range of pupils	4-11 yrs
Number on roll	140
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mr J Killalea
Headteacher	Mrs A O'Brien
Religious Education Subject Leader	Mrs A Greenwood
Date of previous inspection	January 2012

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	2	
The quality of the Word of God	2	
The quality of the Welcome	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	1	
The quality of Witness	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Joseph's is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school in the Diocese of Salford serving the parish of St Joseph, Darwen. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. St Joseph's is a smaller than average school with 144 pupils on roll, 78% are baptised Roman Catholics. The admission number is 30. The trend over time is a falling roll although there are always a number of pupils that join the school midyear. To deal with the falling numbers pupils are arranged in 6 classes in the morning, in the afternoon there is a mixed class of Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. 6.1% of pupils are eligible for free school meals (FSM) and Pupil Premium Grant which is below the national average. 15.7% of pupils have been identified as having a special educational need or disability (SEND) of some kind, none of these pupils have Education Health Care Plans. No pupils are in the care of the local authority (CLA). The majority of pupils are of white British heritage; 12.5% of pupils are from ethnic minority groups, which is below the national average (20.1%) as is the proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language (4%). There are 7 teachers including the headteacher, 5 of these teachers are Roman Catholics, 4 hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies. There are 2 teachers who are not of the Catholic faith.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS GOOD

St Joseph's is a good school with several outstanding features. It is very successful in offering its pupils a holistic Catholic education in an extremely warm, friendly and supportive environment. Christ is clearly at the very centre of all aspects of school life in this welcoming and friendly school. The school mission statement is regularly reviewed by the whole school community, is visible around the school and understood by all. The hard working headteacher is well supported by an enthusiastic and equally hard working RE subject leader. Together they lead a staff team that is totally committed to ensuring the pastoral and spiritual needs of all pupils are met; there is a culture in which the gospel values of love, respect, tolerance and reconciliation are clearly evident. The parish priest and governing body are supportive of the school, they too are committed to ensuring that a high standard of Catholic education is provided for all. The teaching observed ranged from good to outstanding, most groups of pupils, including those with SEND, were seen to be making good progress. Teaching is supported by teaching assistants and efficient administrative staff. Throughout the day pupil behaviour was exceptional. Parents spoken to were very supportive of what the school is striving to achieve.

KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The welcome offered to all and the respect, dignity and care shown to every individual within the community, especially the most vulnerable.
- The quality of the relationships and pupil behaviour across the school are outstanding.
- Engaging and uplifting acts of collective worship that are teacher and pupil led.
- Enthusiastic leadership of the headteacher and the dedicated RE subject leader has enabled continuous improvements to be made in RE and the spiritual life of the school.
- The leadership of the school is supported by a well informed and committed governing body.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS GOOD

The quality of the Catholic life of the school is good. The headteacher and her deputy (RE subject leader), are committed to providing effective Catholic leadership for the whole school. Priority has been given to the delivery of the 'Come and See' scheme, staff training for its delivery has taken place. The school recognises the need to address the variation in the standard of teaching and has therefore included further training as a priority in the subject development plan. The development plan shows the governing body readily makes finance available for the purchase of resources. Lesson observations, book scrutinies, learning walks, moderations and assessments are

all making significant contributions to the quality of provision. The subject leader keeps comprehensive records of all activities related to the subject. The governing body fulfils its role well in relation to its Catholic foundation, it has a good and developing knowledge of its school, it receives regular reports from the leadership team. Governors are linked to subjects and classes, many of them visit school regularly to further develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. The governing body ensures the school places the pupils at the very centre of its decision making and its vision for the future development of the school. Older pupils are eager to embrace leadership roles as councillors, chaplains and prefects. Younger pupils are ready to take advantage of opportunities to plan, prepare and present acts of prayer and worship. The parish priest is a regular and valued visitor to school; he gives much appreciated support to the religious welfare of the school community.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS GOOD

The school mission statement is displayed around the school. It is known and referred to during the daily life of the school as a focus for everyone to do their best. Displays of high quality show pupil composed prayers, celebrate pupil's achievement, follow the liturgical year and explain the operational significance of the 5Ws. Teachers plan their RE lessons well and as a result the quality of teaching across the school is good, in some cases outstanding. In the best lessons speaking and listening were encouraged, discussion was promoted, the classroom environment reflected high levels of religious literacy and differentiation was evident in planning, delivery and outcome. In these classes, good subject knowledge enabled teachers to deliver imaginative lessons that maximised pupil interest; teachers' questions challenged and probed pupil knowledge, skills and understanding. Misconceptions and errors were skilfully turned into learning opportunities. In upper Key Stage 2 pupils interrogated psalms and gospel extracts to more fully understand the impact on Jesus' followers of the events of Easter. Pupils were clearly learning at a high level. A well structured learning environment in Reception class enables the pupils to use their previous learning to support further learning as they develop their RE experience. In some classes insufficient differentiation and subject knowledge meant that the needs of some pupils were not being fully met and there were limited opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. References to Scripture were a feature in all classes. The standard of work in RE books is in line with standards in literacy. Marking is consistent across the school, teachers provide clear feedback and next steps in learning; firm evidence of the importance of RE. Attention to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures they are being taught to challenge injustice and respond to those in need. RE is well funded and resourced and receives the required 10% of curriculum time.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

St Joseph's provides a warm, welcoming and inclusive environment where everyone feels welcomed and valued. Pupils and staff foster a strong sense of belonging and clearly understand the importance of welcoming others into their community. Parents, pupils, staff and governors all spoke positively about the welcome all visitors receive. Pupils are warmly welcomed by staff each morning as they enter school. Parents spoken with said they always feel welcome coming into school and that their children are happy to come to school. They very much appreciate the 'open door' policy that enables them to communicate with staff almost daily. Parent workshops, transition meetings and parent's evenings take place throughout the year and are always well attended. Throughout the year parents and the wider community are invited into school to share celebrations. New families benefit from home visits, visits to school before entry and, if requested, individual tours of the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils and staff were friendly, polite and well-mannered towards the inspectors throughout the day. Families with other faiths are welcomed into the school community, their faith traditions are respected; it is clear that diversity and difference are valued and celebrated. As a result of the strong Catholic ethos the pupils show respect and consideration for all, the importance of the individual is clearly evident. Upper Key Stage 2 pupils were observed discussing with considerable understanding and empathy the events of Holy Week and the 'big questions' posed by human suffering, rejection and man's inhumanity to man. The school adopts a holistic approach to ensure the pupils' social, emotional and cultural needs are catered for. Solid and long lasting relationships have been established with the parish community. Newsletters, curriculum information, class targets and school activities are all published on the school website and in social media.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

At St Joseph's staff and pupils demonstrate high levels of respect and care for each other; the school gives high priority to those in the greatest need. Procedures to protect and safeguard are fully endorsed. Throughout the school good practice enables pupils and staff to feel safe and well cared for and to adopt safe practices themselves. There is genuine concern from all staff for the welfare of all pupils; Jesus Christ is used as an example for the whole community to aspire to. Pupils care for one another; older pupils and the GIFT team help younger pupils to become more prayerful. In classes, older pupils showed a clear understanding of the free availability of God's love and forgiveness. When asked about bullying, pupils said it was not an issue as everybody knew exactly what to do should there be any problems. School has in place policies and procedures that enable it to provide support for pupils experiencing difficult home circumstances, barriers to learning and physical or emotional difficulties. 'Worry Boxes' for pupils to use are to be found in classrooms; school is determined to assist pupils overcome all barriers. Calm support is offered by staff when pupils experience problems remaining on task. Pupils are spoken to sensitively and encouraged to return to their work without fuss causing no disturbance to the class. A breakfast club is available to pupils. The compassionate and caring ethos naturally leads to the school supporting local, national and international charities thus encouraging pupils to feel part of God's world. This is particularly pleasing as some pupils come from homes where life can be difficult at times, yet they still reach out. Governors and senior leaders ensure that consideration is given to supporting the needs of all pupils when making budget, staffing and resourcing decisions.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

Examples of quality prayer and worship are evident around the school; clearly they are very important aspects of school life. Pupils respond well to a range of opportunities to worship. They worship daily and are very comfortable expressing themselves through prayer. Through prayer pupils are provided with rich and meaningful opportunities to strengthen and develop their relationship with God. Several acts of collective worship were observed by inspectors; whole school and class. The headteacher presented a whole school assembly that enabled pupils to engage in prayer and reflect on Jesus curing the blind man. Pupils fully understood the relevance of the story and were able to give examples of occasions when they overcame obstacles between themselves and God. The pupils sang hymns, recited traditional prayers and reflected quietly. In class based worship pupils composed and read aloud their own prayers. In Key Stage 2 class Masses are prepared by the pupils with the support of the parish priest. Prayer takes place at key points during the day; all classrooms have a prayer focus area that often displays pupils' private prayers, thoughts and reflections. Pupils pray with reverence and respect. Celebrations take place throughout the year following the liturgical calendar; Christmas, Lent and Easter celebrations are always well attended by parents. Parents are appreciative of the fact that their children can recite traditional prayers. Teachers use the 'Come and See' scheme to provide pupils with opportunities to plan and present their own para-liturgies. The GIFT team provides an excellent example of pupil leadership and active involvement in relevant, inclusive worship, prayer and reflection. In the summer term Year 5 pupils progress from preparing worship for their class to preparing worship for the whole of Key Stage 2. School accepts its responsibility to play a significant part in supporting pupils through the Sacramental Programme.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

St Joseph's school community recognises that Jesus Christ is at the centre of all that it does. The mission statement is at the heart of the school, everyone in the school strives to give witness to the beliefs and values of the Catholic faith and Christ's teachings in their daily lives. Displays on corridors and in classrooms reflect the commitment of staff and pupils to their Catholic faith. Adults act as role models of the school's mission and values. Gospel values are explicit around the school; the Gospels are known, understood and witnessed by all. Pupils recognise that Jesus is with them in all aspects of school life. Relationships are excellent between all members of the school community, all are happy to talk openly and confidently about their faith and the Catholic life of their school. In several classes from Reception to Year 6 pupils displayed a consistent approach to judging the events of Holy Week as fair or unfair, right or wrong. Older pupils in particular were able to recognise and talk about injustice, the Bible message of bringing light into darkness and joy to sadness. The very youngest pupils identified objects associated with the story of Easter; others were able to re-tell the story with accuracy. The school council and GIFT team are encouraged to be pro-active in school; they are involved in the decision making process that

impacts upon the strategic development of the school. An explicit Catholic culture permeates the whole school; staff and pupils clearly demonstrate and witness to justice, compassion, reconciliation, respect and dignity in their relationships and are able to see the relationship between their own behaviour and Christian values. There are many charitable activities undertaken each year where the school witnesses to a commitment to the Gospel.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- To ensure that the exceptional practice observed is shared so that inspirational teaching is evident throughout the school.
- To undertake relevant training, on and off site, in order to develop and consolidate teacher subject knowledge to a level that will enhance the quality of the delivery of 'Come and See.'

30th March 2017

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us and for making our visit to St Joseph's such an enjoyable occasion, we really enjoyed our time with you. Everybody in your school is inspired by the teachings of Jesus Christ and work very hard to always do their best; because of this we think your school is a good Catholic school.

We enjoyed sharing your lessons with you and listening to you telling us about all the wonderful things you do in St Joseph's. We saw as many of you as we could, we are sorry if we missed any of you. We learned lots by reading your RE books, we were impressed with your work on the walls in your classrooms and corridors. It was very clear to us that you have a good knowledge and understanding of your Catholic faith.

You are obviously very proud of your school. We felt very comfortable to be with so many polite and well-mannered pupils wanting to succeed, looking out for each other and behaving so outstandingly well all day.

All the adults at St Joseph's are extremely proud of what you have achieved and are determined that you and your school will continue to get better and better. To continue the improvement your teachers are going to work together even more closely in order to further develop their already very good knowledge and understanding of the 'Come and See' scheme.

Enjoy the rest of the school year!

Yours sincerely,

Mr John Thorpe
Mr Andrew Sowerby
(Section 48 Inspectors)

Summary Report to Parents

On 30th March 2017 the school was inspected in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The full report has been made available to the school and can also be accessed via both the school website and the Education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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