



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48

Of the Education Act 2005

URN 100832

St Joseph's Catholic School
George Row
London
SE16 4UP

Inspection date: 28 January 2013

Chair of Governors:	Sister Jude Groden
Headteacher:	Mr Mark Macauley
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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

The school is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Cathedral Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Southwark LA. The principal parish which the school serves is the Most Holy Trinity, Dockhead. A small proportion of pupils come from St Peter and the Guardian Angels Rotherhithe with individual pupils attending a range of neighbouring parishes totalling twelve in number. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 90% although the past two years has seen 100% Catholic admissions to reception. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in all key stages.

The school takes pupils from 3 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 342. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals is 25% which is above the national average. The percentage of the pupils with learning difficulties is 11%. The social backgrounds of the pupils are very diverse. Overall, however, significant deprivation is evident. The largest group of pupils are from White British and Black African backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language has risen significantly since the last inspection to 48%.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

GRADE

1

The inspectors agree with the school's own assessment of its effectiveness as written in the excellent self-evaluation form provided where it states: *"At the time of the last inspection the overall effectiveness as a Catholic school was judged to be outstanding. Since that inspection we have continued to raise standards and to effectively develop and improve the Catholic life of the school"*.

It is commendable that the whole school community has worked together to maximise the benefits of a school Religious Education review that has seen a change from a two year cycle to a whole school approach with linked development of assessment practices in Religious Education. These changes have proved highly effective in maximising the learning environment for the pupils, which is in a large part due to the vision and drive of the headteacher.

The mission statement is given a high profile with the pupils having a clear understanding of the statement, which is shared and discussed at classroom level. It is familiar to parents, staff and governors through regular review. As a parent wrote, *"I must say standards at St Joseph's are well above those I have been able to observe. These high standards are not only for our children but most importantly for us parents as well"*.

The school is exceptionally well led by a headteacher who has maintained an outstandingly visionary approach in a context of collegiality that has seen the development of a dedicated staff team clearly committed to providing the best for all pupils. It has benefitted from constancy in leadership which has seen the senior team remain unchanged since the last inspection. The Religious Education coordinator makes a significant contribution to the Catholic life of the school and maintenance of a strong whole school commitment to achieving the highest possible standards for this curriculum area. The school has a long history linked to the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy who started the school and of which it is rightly very proud.

Issues identified in the last inspection have been well addressed and the school's self-evaluation statement fully identifies areas, as needing attention in order to further improve the school's current provision. This reflects a strong wish and capacity to improve further. With care in prioritising these, progress will continue to be effectively managed and improvements sustained.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

St Joseph's School is exceptionally secure and has no significant areas for improvement. The strength and constancy of its senior management, awareness of succession planning and focussed determination to move the school forward, ensures there is an ongoing strong capacity to improve.

Governors, headteacher and staff could:

- Expand the role of the Religious Education coordinator to include paired lesson observations to support her in gaining the widest possible knowledge of Religious Education and learning within the school to facilitate the dissemination of best practice.
- Facilitate the Religious Education coordinator's involvement in Diocesan Religious Education coordinators meetings and in Catholic school clusters to further support the ongoing development of moderation and assessment and the sharing of good practice.

- Review the school website to include an updated Religious Education section that would celebrate the breadth and diversity of its Religious Education curriculum and thereby strengthen further information links with parents.

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The Catholic life of the school

GRADE 1

Leadership and management

The exceptional cohesive nature of leadership at St Joseph's School is both highly effective and a great strength. All at the school are clearly dedicated to developing the Catholic life of the school. This was evidenced through feedback gathered formally and informally on all aspects of the life of the school. These include pupils' views through the School Council and a range of documentation.

Governors are active participants in the life of the school and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in the context of further developing the Catholic life of the school. They fulfil their role in relation to the school's religious identity very well. The Chair of Governors is very proactive and supportive in her role. The school benefits from her expertise as a Religious Education Advisor in the Brentwood Diocese. The governors have separate committee meetings, including an RE committee. In these meetings, the governing body ask to be informed about RE attainment levels and current projects/initiatives. The governors visit the school regularly, attending school services and performances to show their support for the children and school, and to meet the parent community.

The quality of the school's senior management team in developing the Catholic life of the school is outstanding with Gospel values permeating all aspects of school life. They are a committed and visionary team, which can be seen from the school's action plans which show a determination to move forward and develop existing practices as well as introducing new initiatives.

At St Joseph's School, there are strong routines and structures that allow for the promotion of pupils' spiritual and moral development. These ensure good contact with parents, creating effective partnerships that support pupils. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and these are thoroughly discussed with children requiring support with their behaviour, with pupils encouraged to work together to solve problems.

All are aware of the school's Mission Statement which reflects Gospel values, and is evident in the day to day life of the school. It is given a high profile in all school policies which are very comprehensive. Its presentation in the shape of a cross is noteworthy for the value it places on and the prominence it gives to the statement.

Mission Statement

At St
Joseph's
School,
we aim
to grow and learn together within
a loving and caring environment
which reflects
the Gospel
values. We
encourage
all our
children
to reach
their full
potential in
all aspects of
their education

The school has maintained close links with all neighbouring parishes and communities. Community relationships are well supported through a broad range of contributions made by the school. Partnerships at school level and within wider local, home and parish communities lead to high levels of provision across the school.

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

GRADE 1

Assemblies are an important feature of the school and they are always designed to challenge children's thinking, self-discipline and ability to reflect thus helping them to develop spiritually. The school more than fulfils its statutory obligations with regard to worship. The provision for personal and collective worship is a great strength and a central part of the school's ethos. There is a robust cycle of assemblies covering year groups, key stages, class and whole school. Opportunities are provided for private worship in class and in assemblies and liturgies. Within this cycle, the assemblies are attended by children staff, parents, governors and a range of visitors from the wider community. Parents are invited to stay for a period following assemblies and the school reports that they very frequently, comment upon their own learning and reflection during the course of the assemblies, as well as their enjoyment.

The pupils value their classroom focal points and realise, as confirmed in discussions with them, that these are one of the ways that the distinctive Catholic ethos of the school is marked. A broad range of liturgies is celebrated incorporating a wide a range of approaches, encompassing a variety of forms of prayer. Opportunities are provided for spontaneous prayer. The school lives out its commitment to pick up individual pupils on their faith journey enabling them to grow spiritually and morally.

In an assembly attended, led by the headteacher, pupils entered the hall with great reverence marked by the joining of hands which was mirrored by all staff. Good use was made of the interactive white board to exemplify an understanding of the differences between "hearing and listening". Use of current news items generated enthusiastic responses to questions with pupils remaining attentive throughout, reflecting elements of true 'awe and wonder'. Enthusiastic participation in prayer reflects the fact that prayer is central to the life of the school. A parent wrote, *"I was extremely pleased that my child had learnt four prayers after attending the school for a term and he is only 4. The way he behaves at home is also a reflection of the moral attributes of the school."*

Community cohesion

GRADE 1

St Joseph's is a welcoming community in all aspects of its daily life and continues to be an actively inclusive school that works hard to promote and develop community cohesion in the widest sense. Discussions with pupils show that they have regular opportunities to learn about other cultures and this is evidenced in displays around the school and in their books. Staff reinforce the impact pupils have on the lives of others, within the UK and global community through assemblies and the wider curriculum.

All pupils have access to information relating to other faiths to increase their knowledge, understanding and respect through:

- Pupils sharing linked celebrations within the 'Here I Am' scheme of work.
- Key celebrations being shared with the local community for example the KS1 Nativity to which the local community and Sisters of Mercy are invited.
- Catholic teachings being taught alongside a study of other faiths, for example Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. This is supported by visits to other places of worship, for example a Synagogue and a Temple where pupils speak to and hear from other faith leaders. (This was evidenced on the school partnerships

- board, which showed a recent visit from a Rabbi).
- An annual retreat to Aylesford which provides the opportunity for Year 6 pupils to meet with other school leavers and to reflect upon their faith and issues surrounding transition to secondary school.
- Annual fundraising events that raise pupils' awareness of their global responsibilities.
- Children recognising their responsibility for the global environment by becoming a sustainable school and continuing to develop a range of green initiatives.

All pupils have access to information relating to the understanding of social/economic factors and the part these play in the local and wider community. They understand what makes a community through:

- Past pupils coming into school to advise pupils about transition and share their successes to promote high expectations of academic success and their life chances.
- Parents and grandparents being invited into the school to speak about their experiences in other countries, growing up and how the world has changed.
- The School Council being elected using a clear democratic process.

Pupils gain an awareness of the positive impact different cultural backgrounds have on their community and on one another through;

- The school ethos and mission statement which is clearly understood and supported by children and staff.
- The annual Black History Month celebrations which include artists from different cultural backgrounds, theatre groups and authors.

The school promotes good citizenship through:

- Attending a citizenship programme organised by the Metropolitan Police.
- The PHSCE co-coordinator arranging visits from local services including Police, Fire Service, Ambulance Service and Nursing Services.
- Representatives from all these services and the building company working within the school, attending a celebration of the school Patron Saint Joseph the Worker.
- Children in the school regularly act as altar servers in a range of local parishes.
- The Olympic and Paralympic games which were important events linking Olympic values with the Gospel values. The children further learned and reflected on themes of gifts, talents, achievements, unique identity, cultural identities, diversity of people, including those who are still able to compete with impairment and the wonder of God's creation.
- All children in Key Stage 2 attending the Paralympics.
- The school choir singing live at the Olympic opening ceremony. The song sung was 'Jerusalem'.

The pupils are enthusiastic about taking on charitable projects. The school is currently developing a supportive link with The Ivor Leigh Memorial Community School in Sierra Leone. This is a community school founded by the family of two past pupils. The link is providing opportunities for children to appreciate and respect their opportunities and the challenges of a very different community. This is being extended to developing a staff link to support teacher training for the memorial school staff and the intention is to send staff for an exchange to Sierra Leone, West Africa.

As a result of the cohesive nature of the school and the strong ethos, school pupils from a range of backgrounds, learn and play together in harmony and continue to make a strong contribution to the world community.

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Religious Education

The school follows the Diocesan recommended Religious Education scheme of work, 'Here I Am'. Plans are in hand to update this through replacement of the scheme with the updated programme, 'Come and See'. The school has committed significant financial resources to the Religious Education budget to action this.

Achievement and standards in Religious Education

GRADE 1

Attainment on entry has consistently been below average. The school however, is unwavering in its determination to ensure this is not a barrier to future outcomes for its pupils. They make sustained progress through Foundation Stage and on into Key Stage 1 with clear evidence seen in both written and oral work of a developing religious vocabulary. Further very good progress is made at Key Stage 2. The school can be justifiably proud of what it achieves. It not only demonstrates an awareness of the progress of individual pupils but also reflects very sound assessment and moderation within Religious Education. Of particular note is the progress made by pupils receiving support for identified special needs. The progress of these pupils is greatly assisted by the high quality and effective use of classroom support staff. The school is to be commended for this provision.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary within an environment of shared support and cooperation. The pupils are polite, friendly and caring both to each other and visitors. They listen respectfully and are confident to share ideas, experiences and feelings. Potential exists to further raise achievement through increased use of opportunities in upper Key Stage 2 for pupils to engage in more self-directed learning and research. The school is aware of this and has development plans in place to enhance this aspect of their Religious Education curriculum in line with other subjects.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

GRADE 1

Teaching is marked by strong teacher confidence, subject knowledge and the setting of above age related expectations in lessons. Teaching is rarely less than good and more often borders on or is outstanding. Lessons are well planned incorporating a wide range of resources using teaching strategies to meet pupils' needs. Use is made of well-placed classroom focal points with lessons incorporating prayer, singing, periods of reflection and frequent opportunities to draw on pupils' own experiences and previous learning. Learning intentions are clearly displayed and articulated as appropriate. The development of religious vocabulary and cross curricular links with a number of subjects, notably drama and literacy are a considerable strength. Teachers have an excellent rapport with pupils, who show a willingness to participate actively in lessons. Teachers have developed high levels of questioning skills that encourage a dialogue with pupils that supports learning within classrooms. Classroom management skills are of a high order throughout the school. Good use is made of classroom information and communication technology resources, which are appropriately integrated into the teaching of Religious Education.

Workbooks are of a very good standard of content and presentation. They clearly demonstrate differentiation by task, as well as outcome. Books are carefully marked in a supportive and affirming way throughout the school. Assessment has been very successfully introduced in Religious Education and will be further enhanced by the planned introduction of the inclusion of next steps in learning.

A challenging early year's lesson observed was marked by a good range of activities that amplified the discussion session that preceded. Pupils had a good understanding of prayer in both spoken and sung form and of emotions linked to the theme of journeys and 'going away'. A lower Key Stage 2 lesson also reflecting the journeys' topic was impressively

linked to aspects of the liturgical year. The theme of the Immaculate Conception was extremely well related to the understanding of young pupils and the lesson was marked as a result with a high level of development of Religious Education vocabulary and strong cross curricular links. These were also reflected in another lesson marking a strong consistency of approach across the school. A Key Stage 1 lesson expertly extended the topic of journeys to encompass links with the Sacraments, the previous use of role play and links to scripture. The excellent teaching observed, was marked by being well planned, well resourced, having excellent pace, building on previous learning and homework that had been set.

The Religious Education curriculum

The Religious Education curriculum is well organised and the school rightly sees it as a core subject. It fulfils all the requirements for 10% of curriculum time to be used for Religious Education. Policies continue to be detailed and informative reflecting the ongoing strength of cross-curricular links. This is further enhanced by an extensive programme of extracurricular activities, in which participation is closely monitored by the school to ensure equal opportunities are provided for all. As a result of the pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development they develop excellent relationships and are very supportive of one another in a range of different contexts. They participate in several activities showing enjoyment. They achieve their potential and respect and support one another as individuals.

Pupils particularly enjoy the teaching in their Religious Education lessons and they are proud of the progress they make in both their knowledge and spiritual development. The pupils have opportunities to discuss, think and reflect. Teachers endeavour to ensure that lessons are interactive and engaging and encourage full pupil participation. All teaching and support staff are able to contribute to the teaching of Religious Education. The school's approach to the Religious Education curriculum is one that facilitates the effective use of a range of teaching methods. This engages and stimulates the pupils through music and a good range of resources providing a stimulating learning environment.

Pupils expressed enjoyment in their Religious Education lessons and their workbooks reflect this. They could now be given opportunities to extend the range of formats in which they present their work.

Leadership and management of Religious Education

Religious Education is very effectively led and managed by a strong team made up of the headteacher, assistant headteacher, who is also the liturgy coordinator, and the Religious Education coordinator and as a result the leadership and management of Religious Education is excellent. Religious Education has a very high status within the wider curriculum. A consistent and collaborative approach to the subject has secured very good progression between the key stages.

Religious Education is given equal standing to other curriculum areas within the school development plan and has generous levels of budgetary provision.

The Religious Education coordinator's documentation and record keeping are substantial and very well presented.

The school offers good support to newly qualified teachers and non-Catholic members of staff, equipping them well to support the religious life of the school.

GRADE 1

GRADE 1

Parents expressed considerable satisfaction regarding the information they received about the Religious Education curriculum. It was felt this lent great assistance to supporting pupils at home. Of particular note was the support given by the school to the pupils and their families at the time of secondary transfer. It was also felt that the school being a one and a half form entry school was very well organised to ensure all pupils benefited in vertically grouped situations.

The school issued 342 parental questionnaires with a high return of 172. Unusually all returns expressed satisfaction with 'What the school offers' and with 'How the school helps pupils to progress'. This high level of appreciation of the excellent work of the school is best summed up in the following parental comments from the questionnaires, which are just some of the 29 supportive comments made;

"Since my son started at St Joseph's he now pays attention at Mass every Sunday. It makes me feel so proud when he comes home telling me about baby Jesus and then he shows me how he blesses himself."

"I am so happy that my child attends St Joseph's which I believe to be the best school in Southwark. My child has learned so much educationally and religiously from teachers who are committed to doing their best for our children."

"I am very appreciative of the support and religious guidance my son received from his teacher and school during a bereavement of a very close loved one. I believe that played a big part in my son's acceptance of the death and make sense of the situation."

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