



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Inspection Report



Name of School: St Joseph's Primary School

LEA: Essex

Inspection Date: 5th July 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: 211
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: 3rd June 2010

School Address:
Vaagen Road
Canvey Island
Essex
SS8 9DP

Tel. No. 01268 683903
Headteacher: Miss J. Walker
Chair of Governors: Mr D. O'Halloran

Information about the school

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is one form entry in Canvey Island in the county of Essex and part of the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parish of Our Lady of Canvey and The English Martyrs, Canvey Island. There are currently 211 pupils aged 4-11 on roll. The great majority of pupils are of White British Heritage with 10% coming from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Around 65% of pupils are Catholics with the remainder coming from other Christian denominations, other faiths or none. 80% of the teachers are Catholics and four have the CCRS or a Theology qualification. The proportion of pupils with special needs is around the national average. The school is part of the Canvey Schools Partnership and there are also good links with the local Catholic Deanery schools.

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 Catholic school. The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from Catholic life, the way leaders promote and evaluate the provision for religious education and Catholic life and the quality of the prayer and collective worship provided by the school are all excellent. The quality of pupils' learning and progress in religious education is very good as are the standards of attainment. There is regular rigorous monitoring of teaching, learning, and assessment which is leading to good outcomes for all groups. The Catholic ethos is outstanding with prayer and worship being central to the life of the school. Opportunities for spiritual and moral development are offered through the curriculum and the wider life of the school. The governing body offers a good level of support and members are familiar with areas for development. Pastoral care is very good and shared by all staff. Relationships within the school and with the parish are excellent and pupils feel respected, well cared for and supported in their learning. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the standard of religious education and the Catholicity of the school.

The school has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement. The last inspection in 2010 identified the need for 'next steps' marking along with the areas for development identified by the school in its self-evaluation. Since then a new headteacher and senior management team have been appointed. They have built on existing strengths and put in place further improvements. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school which is shared with governors and the whole school community. She is also religious education subject leader and has produced a comprehensive action plan to sustain effectiveness. Regular, rigorous monitoring is ensuring that teaching is of a high standard and appropriate to children's needs.

The quality of self-evaluation is very 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 well planned curriculum which follows the 'Come and See' programme is supported by 'Year of Mercy' materials and enables pupils to make connections between faith and their own lives. Staff are encouraged to improve their skills through training and moderating sessions in school. There are plans for joint moderation of pupils' work with other deanery schools.

The current leadership has a very good capacity to maintain effectiveness. The headteacher shows excellent leadership of a Catholic community and is well supported by her deputy and senior leadership. Governors have a wide range of expertise and skills which enables them to support and challenge. Systems are in place to develop and strengthen initiatives which are leading to very good outcomes for all pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to focus on differentiation and planning to ensure all pupils achieve their full potential in religious education.
- Continue to implement areas identified in the school improvement plan

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Pupil achievement and progress in religious education are very good. Pupils spoken to said they enjoy religious education, are eager to participate in activities and keen to do well. Their behaviour for learning is excellent. They have a good understanding of scripture, the sacraments and Catholic faith appropriate to their age and abilities. Lessons observed were well planned with a range of cross curricular activities. In an outstanding Year 6 lesson on the 'Common Good' pupils studied the gospel passage from Luke. where Jesus speaks in the synagogue. They went on to engage with questions of poverty, justice and responsibility culminating in an insight into what the 'Good news' might mean for the world. Pupils' workbooks are well presented and show progress and coverage of the curriculum. Marking is positive and there are comments to help pupils make the 'next steps' in their learning. Other faiths are taught well and there are plans to include visits to other places of worship.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They take full advantage of opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. Pupils choose the charities they wish to support and the inspiration of the 'Year of Mercy' has led to the choice of groups which reflect the Corporal Works of Mercy. These include Cafod, the Shoebox Appeal, 'Little Haven' and HARP, a charity which cares for homeless people. Fundraising for pupils at a school in Malawi is giving rise to an awareness of global justice. Pupils spoken to are able to link these activities with the life and teachings of Jesus. Pupils are given responsibilities to support the life of the school as members of the school council, 'mini vinnies', play leaders and monitors. A 'buddy bench' ensures pupils always have a playground friend. There are very good links with the local parish with masses in the church where pupils act as altar servers, readers and offertory takers. Pupils show consideration and respect for adults and each other. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils value the sense of security, friendship and community created within the school.

Prayer and collective worship are an integral part of school life. Pupils regularly prepare and lead acts of worship including the Stations of the Cross in Lent and fully understand the importance of prayer. They are keen to participate in class liturgies, Masses and assemblies. The Church's liturgical year is emphasised through holy days, celebrations and classroom prayer tables. Pupils are given many opportunities to understand how faith links to everyday experiences. They respond positively to opportunities to develop their faith journey through meditation and reflective prayer. A very moving example was seen during the inspection when Year 1 pupils went to the Rosary Garden where they spent a few minutes in silence observing God's creation and reflecting on the people who share their world. This was followed by a reflection on a psalm of thankfulness for neighbours everywhere. Pupils learn the traditional prayers of the Church and pray the Angelus at noon as well as writing their own prayers, many of which were seen during the inspection. They are familiar with the school mission statement, 'We pray together, we work together, we play together'. Preparation for the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation in Year 3 are parish based with support from the school. This includes a diocesan day at St Bernard's School to celebrate First Holy Communion. There is also a Deanery mass at Our Lady of Lourdes Church for Year 6 leavers. Pastoral care is very good and pupils are aware of the support available to them. They feel safe, cared for and know where to go when they need help. A counsellor from Brentwood Catholic Children's Society works alongside pupils as required. Parents value the care given to their children and the good level of communication with staff. Responses to a questionnaire were positive with many appreciative comments including, 'The values of Christ are strongly modelled by adults, teachers and pupils alike.'

By the end of Key Stage 2 standards of attainment meet or exceed diocesan expectations and all groups make very good progress. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of individuals and groups of pupils. The headteacher as subject leader gives religious education the same importance as other core subjects and uses staff meeting time and in-service sessions to support teachers. In a few classes pupils would benefit from a clearer focus in differentiation in their work

Leaders, governors and managers

Grade 1

All leaders are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. The headteacher demonstrates excellent leadership of the school through the way she promotes, monitors and evaluates the provision for the Catholic life of the school. She communicates a clear Catholic vision to the whole

community and is supported in this by staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. The 'Year of Mercy' is being celebrated at present with a 'Door of Mercy' in every classroom. This is giving rise to a sense of service and the responsibilities of leading a Catholic life.

Governors work closely with the headteacher 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 and visits to school events as well as meetings with senior leaders. Along with the headteacher they monitor the school's provision for worship and religious education. Governors access 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. They recently attended a school based 'Governor Awareness' day on the patronal feast for St Joseph. The local parish priest in his role as link governor for religious education has a clear picture of current developments and visits classes as well as conducting Masses and celebrations.

As subject leader, the headteacher produces a targeted action plan each year and is very well placed to support new teachers through guidance on planning, delivery, assessment and use of resources. She has also led whole staff training on the 'Come and See' programme. She monitors religious education through workbook scrutiny, observing teaching and evaluating outcomes. She has developed a portfolio of assessed work to demonstrate cover of the curriculum and standards attained by pupils. She has put in place strategies to ensure all pupils achieve well. A system to enable progress in religious education across the school to be tracked is also in place. Assessment is accurate and enables pupils to demonstrate their knowledge of the relevant concepts. There are plans to moderate pupils' work with other deanery schools.

Leaders ensure that St Joseph's is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. The school offers a very wide range of extra-curricular activities and participates in local community events. There are good links with other schools including the Catholic secondary schools to which some pupils transfer. 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 as well as the curriculum information letters and the 'Wednesday Word' which enable them to support their children's learning and faith journey.

Provision

Grade 1

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is very good. During the inspection, lessons observed were good or better. Pupils are given an excellent 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. Behaviour for learning is excellent. Teachers have good subject knowledge and respond well to pupils' comments by taking opportunities to extend knowledge and develop understanding. In most year groups well differentiated tasks enable pupils to work with enthusiasm and interest. Good support by teaching assistants is a feature of many lessons. Marking is positive and includes suggestions of ways to improve. There is every indication that current good standards are likely to be maintained.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is very good. At least 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 supplemented by 'Year of Mercy' materials and 'Mercy' awards which acknowledge the contribution pupils make to the Catholic life of the school. There are good quality resources including class sets of Bibles which give pupils good access to scripture. Religious education displays around the school emphasise the importance of faith to the work of the school. 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, dance, singing and music. At the time of the inspection pupils were preparing for the 60th anniversary of the founding of the school by the Sisters of Mercy which involved a celebration Mass attended by the Bishop. 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 includes children's work. Feast day Masses are celebrated throughout the year with the parish community and the traditions of the Church are explored with pupils. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to many celebrations and pupils visit the church frequently. The parish priest supports the school through Masses and 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 assessment procedures to enable pupils to demonstrate their understanding of religious concepts more clearly. Tracking of pupils' progress is providing a 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 very good practice in all areas.

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.