



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Inspection Report

Name of School: St Joseph's Primary School

LEA: Essex

Inspection Date: 16th November 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: 116
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: June 2012

School Address:
The Drive,
Dovercourt,
Harwich,
Essex
CO12 3SU

Tel. No. 01255 503493
Executive Headteacher: Mrs M. Kelly
Chair of Governors: Mr R. Colley

Information about the school

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is a small school in Dovercourt, close to Harwich in Essex and part of the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parish of Our Lady Queen of Heaven Dovercourt and nearby villages. There are currently 116 pupils aged 4-11 on roll divided into four mixed age classes. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds with a small number coming from a range of other ethnic groups. 45% of pupils are Catholics with the remainder coming from other Christian denominations, other faiths or none. 33% of the teachers are Catholics; one has the CCRS qualification and another has embarked on the course. The proportion of pupils with special needs is around the national average. The school has had a period of turbulence recently with many changes in senior leadership. There is now an executive headteacher, a new head of school and a stable staff. It is part of a Small Schools cluster and has good links with local deanery schools.

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 and improving Catholic school. The quality of pupils' learning and progress in religious education is good as are the standards of attainment. Pupils achieve well and enjoy their learning in religious education. The quality of the prayer and collective worship provided by the school is good and the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from its Catholic life is outstanding. The new head of school supported by the executive headteacher has put in place an improvement plan which consolidates good practice and is leading to better outcomes for all pupils. She is also subject leader for religious education and ensures staff have access to continuous professional development as well as offering individual support. 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. Governors have a wide range of expertise and take an active role in the life of the school. Pastoral care is good and shared with the local parish priest and all staff. Relationships within the school and with the local parish are excellent and pupils feel well cared for and supported in their learning. Parents are very happy with religious education and the Catholic life of the school.

The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement. The last inspection in 2012 identified a number of areas for development linked to religious education which have been fully addressed. The current development plan is rigorous and comprehensive. The executive headteacher works closely with the head of school and the governing body which includes the parish priest to ensure pupils have the best possible support in their faith journey. New teachers are given guidance and support on all aspects of Catholic education. Regular, rigorous monitoring ensures that teaching is of a high standard and appropriate to children's needs.

What the school should do to improve further as identified in the religious education action plan:

- Continue to raise standards of teaching and learning in religious education through continuous professional development and support for staff as well as joint moderation and assessment of pupils' work.
- Develop pupils' skills in planning and leading collective worship to enable them to play a fuller part in prayer and liturgy.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 2

Pupil achievement and progress in religious education are good. Pupils spoken to said they enjoy religious education and the range of activities involved, particularly art and debate. Pupils observed during the inspection worked well together and had 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 especially in Early Years and Key Stage 1. A lesson on the topic of Baptism for Reception and some Year 1 pupils included a wide range of activities to ensure children fully understood the concept of

welcome to God's family. In Key Stage 2 lessons teachers encourage pupils to use bibles and access scripture with confidence. In one Year 5/6 lesson on vocation the concept of canonisation was introduced with reference to the life of St Francis. The lesson enabled pupils to make links with the life of the saint with the teaching of Christ in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. It contributed very well to pupils' understanding of vocations in history and the present day. Across the school workbooks are well presented and show pupils' progress and coverage of the curriculum. Marking is positive and help pupils make the 'next steps' in their learning. Other faiths are taught well and a visit to synagogue is planned.

Pupils make an outstanding 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. Last year pupils raised funds for Brentwood Catholic Children's Society, Macmillan, Dementia Care, Unicef, Food Bank collections and Cafod. Pupils are given responsibilities to support the life of the school as school council members, liturgy leaders, eco committee members and as house captains. There are excellent links with the local parish with a joint Christmas bazaar and help with Lent lunches. Families and parishioners are invited to many school celebrations. Pupils visit a local care home and take part in many community events including Joint Schools Brentwood Carol concert as well as sporting and cultural occasions. Regular school and class Masses are held when pupils take an active role. During the inspection a class Mass involved pupils as readers, altar servers and offertory. Many parents were present, all pupils participated and the singing was excellent. Liturgy leaders are being trained to prepare and set up for Mass in school. The parish priest is a frequent visitor and acts as an additional teaching resource.

Pupils are very well behaved and show consideration and respect for adults and each other. Pupils spoken to said they value the sense of friendship and community created within the school. They are familiar with the school's mission statement, 'Inspired by the life of St Joseph, we live, love and learn together' which is on display throughout the school. Pupils are aware of the support available to them and know where to go when they need help. The school follows the 'Journey in Love' programme to support the development of personal relationships. A counsellor from Brentwood Catholic Children's Society is employed to support pupils when necessary.

Prayer and collective worship are an integral part of school life. Pupils understand the importance of prayer and participate readily. 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, many of which were seen during the inspection. They are familiar with the Angelus, Stations of the Cross and the Rosary which is said during October. Preparation for the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation in Year 3 are parish based with support from the school. There are plans to give pupils additional opportunities to plan and lead acts of worship.

By the end of Key Stage 2 standards of attainment meet diocesan expectations and all groups make good progress. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the learning of individuals and groups. School leadership gives religious education the same importance as other core subjects and uses staff meeting time and in-service sessions to support teachers.

Leaders and managers

Grade 2

Leadership and management of the school are good overall and outstanding in the way the provision for the Catholic life of the school is evaluated and monitored. Throughout a period of instability and staff changes leaders have continued to communicate a clear Catholic vision to the whole community. Together the executive headteacher, head of school and governors are committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils through review of current provision and implementation of improvements. They ensure all staff understand the Church's mission in education and are committed to providing opportunities for spiritual and moral development. They foster parish links through invitations to school masses and other celebrations. Catholicity is evident in displays around the school and in the classroom prayer areas.

The governing body includes members who have a wide range of expertise in Catholic education and a high level of commitment to the life of the school. They are well placed to monitor the school's provision

for prayer and worship as well as religious education. Governors are invited to visit the school regularly and have accessed training provided by the diocese to enable them to evaluate aspects of the religious life of the school and to challenge and support effectively. A governors' action plan drawn up each year identifies aspects of school life which require regular monitoring. An annual vision day for staff and governors provides a focus for current practice and future developments to be explored. The experienced link governor for religious education makes frequent visits to liaise with the subject leader and is involved in the cycle of monitoring including book scrutiny and collective worship. There are plans to further develop her role.

The new head of school who is also subject leader is implementing a targeted action plan for religious education and gives a high priority to supporting and assisting her staff. She holds training sessions for all staff and supports them to ensure that all pupils achieve well through differentiated tasks. She holds monthly 'Before you Begin' sessions for staff and works in two classes to model best practice and support new teachers. She has continued to support and build links with parents who are overwhelmingly positive about religious education and the Catholic life of the school. One parent wrote, 'The love of God is the very core of this school and it shines through each and every child. The children's love for one another, for their school and its community is second to none.'

School leaders make every effort to ensure that St Joseph's is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. The school offers a range of extra-curricular activities as well as before and After School Clubs to support pupils' needs and interests. It also participates in local community events. There are good links with other diocesan schools including the Catholic secondary school to which some pupils transfer at the end of Key Stage 2. Understanding of other faiths and cultures is promoted through the wider curriculum. 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 and weekly newsletters.

Provision

Grade 2

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. During the inspection, all lessons observed were at least good. And some were outstanding. Pupils are given a sound 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. Pupils make good progress and behaviour for learning is also good. Teachers respond well to pupils' comments and are well supported by leadership. Differentiated tasks enable pupils to work with enthusiasm and interest. The use of 'driver' words ensures that tasks are pitched at an appropriate level. Effective support by teaching assistants is a feature of many lessons. Marking is positive and there are 'next steps' comments and suggestions of ways to improve. There is every indication that current good standards are likely to be maintained or further improved.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is good. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education and the programme 'Come and See' has been implemented throughout the school. It is enhanced by 'Journey in Love' and visits from the local parish priest as well as a speaker from Cafod. Good resources include class sets of Bibles. Other faiths are taught well. Religious education displays around the school emphasise the importance of faith to its work. The curriculum enables pupils to become aware of their responsibility for each other and their environment. It contributes well to their spiritual and moral development.

Provision for prayer and worship at St Joseph's is good. 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. 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. The parish priest supports the school through Masses and classroom visits as well as acting as a chaplain. Pupils have the opportunity to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation at Advent and Lent. The school chapel is available for pupils at break times and there are plans for a prayer garden in the grounds.

The school is constantly seeking to develop practice to improve outcomes for pupils. The head of school is currently reviewing assessment procedures to prepare the school for changes envisaged later in the year. She is also introducing the Target Tracker system to support staff as they track pupils' progress in religious education. 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 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.