



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Denominational (S48) Inspection Report

Name of School: St Joseph's Junior Catholic Primary School

Local Authority: Waltham Forest

Inspection Date: 6 May 2022

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Angela Podmore (Lead Inspector)

This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 and 2011.

**Type of School: LA Maintained VA School
School Category: Primary
Age range of pupils: 7 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 151
Appropriate Authority: Waltham Forest
Date of previous inspection: 11 December 2015**

School Address:	Vicarage Road Leyton E10 7DX
Tel. No.	020 8539 5971
Headteacher:	Mrs Merryl D'Souza
Chair of Governors:	Mrs Nicolas Brunton

Information about the school

St Joseph's Catholic Junior School is a two form entry Voluntary Aided school in the London Borough of Waltham Forest. It serves the parish of St Joseph's, Leyton. There are currently 151 pupils on roll, 91% of whom are Catholic, with the remainder coming from other Christian denominations or other faith backgrounds. There is a higher percentage of pupils who have English as an additional language, as well as those in receipt of pupil premium funding, than nationally. The number of pupils who are deemed to have Special Educational Needs is also higher than national average. 82% of the teachers are Catholic and four teachers hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or another Catholic qualification.

The school is part of the Aquinas Trust, a group of Catholic schools across the Waltham Forest deanery. The school federated with St Joseph's Infant school in May 2021.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Joseph's Junior School provides its pupils with a highly effective Catholic education. Under the leadership of the dedicated Headteacher, school leaders and governors have responded very well to a period of significant change and challenge. They ensure pupils have a safe, supportive and caring environment where they can grow, flourish and develop morally and spiritually. The school celebrates its diversity and encourages all pupils to follow its motto 'Believe, Achieve and Inspire'.

All school leaders and governors share a vision and ambition for pupils to grow into proud global citizens ready to take their place in society. Their passion and ambition make them excellent witnesses to the Church's mission in education and to ensure that the Catholic identity of the school is widely celebrated.

Governors work very closely with school leaders and have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Through regular visits to the school, they know the school very well and share the ambition of the Headteacher and her team. The innovative pupil shared days, where a governor shadows a pupil for a day, gives them a very clear picture of what a typical day in the life of a pupil at St Joseph's school is like. This information is then shared with all governors and staff to identify strengths and areas for development.

Pupils feel very safe at school and enjoy coming to school each day; their welfare and the welfare of all members of the community is given a very high priority through excellent pastoral care. This was especially vital and welcome during recent lockdowns. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the support their children receive.

Pupils are excellent ambassadors for their school and happily offer visitors a warm welcome, they are keen to share their experience and work with all.

St Joseph's School is a community with a strong capacity for continuous improvement.

What the school should do to improve further:

- Continue to share and further develop the excellent practice in the school so that more teaching can be judged as outstanding, so ensuring all lessons provide challenge for all pupils.

- Ensure that the school website renovation is completed by the end of the academic year (July 2022), so that it fully identifies the Catholic ethos, character and identity of the school and that the school response to live as a Catholic community, at the service of the Church's mission in education can also be clearly identified.

CATHOLIC LIFE

Grade 1

The Catholic Life of St Joseph's is a strength of the school. It is a community based firmly on Catholic traditions and practice. The school is a vibrant Catholic community which supports all pupils and staff to participate in and contribute to the Catholic Life.

Catholic life is clearly evidenced through the positive relationships observed between all members of the school community. Both parents and pupils comment on the help and guidance they receive from teachers who they say are always available and supportive. Further evidence is seen in the respect and attitudes pupils have for each other and for their learning. They arrive to lessons ready to learn.

Pupils are proud to be members of St Joseph's School and are grateful for the many opportunities and extra-curricular activities offered them. The Religious Education (RE) ambassadors take their role very seriously. The application process to become an ambassador ensures that those selected are good role models and appreciate and understand the privilege of being chosen. They fully understand that it is a role of service and duty not of power, and that they are charged with making St Joseph's an example of duty and commitment. They speak enthusiastically of the ways they support others by raising funds through cake sales and non-uniform days for charities such as CAFOD, Brentwood Catholic Children's Society and Macmillan Cancer Support, as well as donating items for a local food bank. Those fortunate enough to visit the food bank gained a deeper understanding of how their donations are invaluable in helping the poor and vulnerable. Catholic social teaching is well embedded in their actions, be it raising funds for those less fortunate than themselves or being gentle and caring to their peers or welcoming newcomers and visitors to make them feel at home. Pupils fully understand that by doing so they are following Jesus and doing what he wants them to do. Pupils are very clear of the importance of treating everyone the way they themselves want to be treated. The 'WWJD' stickers displayed all around the school environs are gentle reminders of this.

The pastoral welfare of pupils is given the highest priority and follows a carefully planned tiered system so that help and support is provided quickly and effectively. Pupils have access to Circle time, Lego therapy, Circle of Friends group or Nurture and Rainbow programmes to help and support them. Support is also available via a music emotional literacy programme or a counsellor from the Brentwood Catholic Children's Society.

The school community enjoys celebrating the achievements of others and the RE ambassadors speak with enthusiasm of their Friday celebration assembly where everyone's achievements are acknowledged and rewarded. They were keen for the inspector to understand that these celebrations are not just about getting the best marks but it also for being a good role model, helping others, showing acts of kindness or showing your best behaviour. The reported that having your name in the Golden Book is really special.

Classroom prayer focal areas are beautifully maintained and lovingly cared for. Pupils have the opportunity to contribute to the class prayer books which are displayed on the table for all to see and appreciate. There is also a prayer intention box and a worry box for them to access. Pupils in Year 6 spoke of their family prayer books where they are encouraged to join together with members of their family to write a prayer. They were keen to share these with the inspector and were very complimentary about the prayers of their peers.

One of the many roles of the RE ambassadors is to ensure that the prayer areas are well kept. They have devised a check list which they use to ensure that the very high standards are maintained. They

also look at the beautiful RE working walls to ensure that these are updated regularly and that driver words and religious topic vocabulary are prominently displayed.

The newly renovated prayer garden is a calm oasis in an area of the busy playground. Pupils have worked diligently to clear, what was once a neglected corner, into a lovely space where they can sit quietly to pray and reflect. During the inspection, pupils in Year 3 made Rosary beads and took them down to the prayer garden to say a decade of the Rosary before the statue of Our Lady. The RE ambassadors have plans to develop the area even further by adding plants and flowers.

The fabric of the building, once tired, is now looking warm and welcoming. The waiting area at the entrance to the school is an inviting calm space graced with pupils' religious art work. A beautiful display of refugees is added testimony to the pupils' commitment to Catholic Social Teaching with pupils being able to link the display with Jesus' life. Displays and art work around the school environs celebrate the work of the pupils. During 'Aspirational Week', pupils chose inspirational people as names for their classes. Pupils felt that these figures, from diverse backgrounds were representative of their school community. Now, displays of Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, Mary Seacole and Greta Thunberg send messages of both inspiration and aspiration to pupils, echoing the school motto 'Believe, Achieve and Inspire'.

The school Mission Statement 'Jesus Christ is the unseen but ever present teacher in our school, our model and inspiration for all who work here' is known by all pupils and understood for how it affects their daily lives. Currently it is being reviewed and rewritten by all members of the school community to form a joint statement across the federation. RE ambassadors were keen to inform the inspector of their involvement in this undertaking.

Pupils enjoy learning about other world faiths and displays on Judaism and Islam demonstrate the high quality learning which has taken place. School leaders ensure that the experience of pupils from other world faiths is used to enhance the learning opportunities of all pupils. One parent said she and her daughter were very honoured and proud to be asked to talk about Islam and bring in artefacts to share with her peers.

School leaders demonstrate their commitment to the Catholic Life of the School and ensure it is given a high priority. The budget is in line with that of other core subjects and the curriculum fully meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Staff have regular opportunities for Continual Professional Development to improve their own practice. Governors hold the school to account through regular visits to monitor provision and evaluate outcomes for pupils. New governors are charged with visiting classes as part of their induction to the school.

The recently appointed senior leadership team under the direction of the dedicated Headteacher is tireless in its determination to make St Joseph's a beacon of Catholic education in the local area. They are working hard to reverse the falling roll in numerous ways, including a change in the Admissions Policy, leaving copies of the school prospectus in the parish church for all to see, opening the 'After School Club' to the wider community and leaflet drops advertising the school to local businesses and homes.

St Joseph's follows the diocesan 'Come and See' programme of work which enables pupils to build up their knowledge, skills and understanding year on year and allows them to make links with their learning and everyday lives.

Pupils' achievement in RE is good and in line with that of other core subjects. The RE subject leader uses the diocesan assessment grids to record progress which is then transferred to the newly acquired Target tracker. This enables staff to check progress and implement interventions where necessary.

A recent evaluation of RE, alongside training provided by the school's diocesan Primary Link Advisor has seen RE lessons become more creative. Pupils comment that they enjoy RE lessons more now because they have more creative activities. Work in pupils' books shows writing for different genres, written responses to religious art, role play activities and, a favourite of the pupils, 'hot seating'. During the inspection Year 6 pupils were enjoying planning a television interview with Lydia to discuss her experience of meeting Paul. Their planning showed a good knowledge and understanding of scripture as well as the techniques involved in interviewing people to elicit information. Pupils worked together well and were fully engaged in the activity.

Teachers plan lessons within phase groups. This allows staff an appreciation of previously studied topics and the expected levels of attainment, as well as the levels pupils are expected to achieve by the end of each topic. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and, in all lessons observed, most pupils were attentive and focused and demonstrated high levels of behaviour for learning. Pupils collaborate well in small group work and discussions and are keen to respond to teacher questioning. In the strongest lessons, teachers moved learning on quickly and used assessment to continually check understanding and so correct any misconceptions quickly and effectively. They used questioning effectively to challenge and extend pupil's thinking.

The recently appointed and enthusiastic RE leader and Assistant Headteacher support their colleagues very well. They champion RE at every opportunity. Since taking up their appointments they have ensured that RE lessons are more creative and introduced team teaching and modelling of good practice to enhance learning opportunities and so improve pupil outcomes.

Moderation of pupils' work takes place regularly with colleagues across the federation and is due to take place with colleagues from the Aquinas Trust. This ensures that teacher assessment is an accurate reflection of pupils' work. During moderation staff are also able to discuss any barriers to learning, which may be preventing a pupil from achieving; measures are then put in place to support or challenge individuals.

Pupil books show a wide variety of work and demonstrate that pupils are developing age appropriate religious literacy. Feedback is given regularly so that pupils know how to improve their work. The quality of work in books show that pupils are making good progress.

Collective Worship is integral to the life of the school and actively promoted by school leaders.

Pupils are afforded many opportunities to lead and participate in acts of worship. Daily prayers, held at various times throughout the day, are confidently led by RE ambassadors using both the traditional prayers of the church as well as personal petitions. Pupils enjoy different types of prayer including meditation and reflection, they report that they enjoy painting stones and writing their personal prayers on them and placing them in the prayer garden for everyone to read. Pupils are proud of their class room prayer areas as well as the prayer garden which is used both for private individual prayer as well as class acts of worship.

During the inspection pupils told the inspector about the Five Fingers of prayer, the thumb is nearest when you put your hands together so we pray for those closest to us, the pointing finger is for teachers and people who heal, the tallest finger is for leaders, the ring finger is for the vulnerable, those in trouble or pain and the smallest finger is for ourselves. Pupils say how it helps them to focus their prayers.

Pupils have many opportunities to come together to celebrate and worship. A beautiful and reflective Mass, led by Year 5 pupils, to celebrate Mary was held during the inspection. Pupils planned and prepared and chose readings, prayers of the faithful and hymns. They read clearly and confidently, clearly evidencing that this is something they are used to and comfortable doing. The singing was beautiful and all pupils behaved impeccably throughout. Pupils enjoyed listening to and responding to the Parish Priest's questions during his homily and were delighted when he told individual pupils that he would say Mass for them and their families as a reward for their excellent responses. The atmosphere was one of reverence and celebration.

Collective worship is an integral part of life at St Joseph's and has a clear message and direction. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of the Church's liturgical year which can be clearly seen in class prayer areas and the Masses held throughout the year. Parents are kept well informed of Collective Worship via the weekly school newsletter and are now being invited back to join the school in their liturgical events. The recent Stations of the Cross service brought together the infant and junior schools in the parish church, where the RE leaders supported the younger children in their reading.

Masses to celebrate the start of the academic year, feast days and Class Saints days are firmly embedded throughout the year and take place alternately between the school and the parish church. As part of the Aquinas Trust, pupils come together to celebrate as a wider community. Links with the parish are strong and both priests in the parishes are welcome and regular visitors to the school. The Parish Priest is the link RE governor on the governing body. He is due to hold Mass to celebrate his jubilee, at the school.