



## **DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD**

### **Denominational (S48) Inspection Report**

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

**Local Authority: Essex**

**Inspection Date: 1 July 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: Voluntary Aided  
School Category: Primary  
Age range of pupils: 4 - 11  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 182  
Appropriate Authority: Essex  
Date of previous inspection: 19 April 2016**

<b>School Address:</b>	<b>Trinity Square South Woodham Ferrers Essex CM3 5JX</b>
<b>Tel. No.</b>	<b>01245 321828</b>
<b>Headteacher:</b>	<b>Mrs Sarah Ginzler-Maher</b>
<b>Chair of Governors:</b>	<b>Mrs Emma Spring</b>

## Information about the school

St Joseph's is a one form entry primary school. It is part of the Christ the King Federation in the diocese of Brentwood. It serves the parishes of South Woodham Ferrers and Danbury. The school was founded in 1982 and occupies a shared site with the Anglican school, Trinity, St Mary's.

There are currently 182 pupils on roll, 46% of whom are Catholic, 30% are from other Christian denominations and 25% from other faith backgrounds.

There are a lower number of pupils with English as an additional language than the national average as well as a lower number of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding. Nine pupils have an Education Health Care Plan and there are 14% who are deemed to have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities. There are 9 teachers at the school, five of whom have obtained the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or another Catholic qualification.

## 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 primary school. It is a community built on faith, Gospel values, and respect for everyone. It provides its pupils with a secure, loving and supportive environment where everyone can grow and flourish in the secure knowledge that they are recognised as unique individuals, each with their own gifts and talents. The executive headteacher provides excellent and inspirational leadership. Under her guidance the school community enjoys acknowledging and celebrating good behaviour, hard work and service to others. St Joseph's enables its pupils to grow spiritually, morally and academically, irrespective of their faith background. Pupils, staff, parents and governors are proud of St Joseph's, fully recognising its inclusivity and its Catholic character and ethos, one parent commenting that it is a 'community that bonds'

Pupils enjoy attending school and being part of a welcoming and close knit community of faith; they wear their school uniform with pride. They are secure in the knowledge that their well-being is given the highest priority, and that in their journey through the school, their individual gifts and talents are nurtured and encouraged, enabling them to be confident, versatile, compassionate young people, ready to take their place in the wider community. One parent commented that the respect shown from everyone in the community is everywhere and not only do the youngest pupils look up to their older peers, but the older pupils fully respect and encourage the younger pupils.

The school environment is well cared for and cherished. Beautiful displays, banners and iconography reflect the schools Catholic heritage and provide pupils with an outstanding place in which to learn and grow.

School leaders under the expert guidance of the committed executive headteacher share a clear vision for the school. They are passionate in their ambition to be excellent witnesses and role models in promoting Gospel values. Governors are highly knowledgeable and share the drive and ambition of school leaders in ensuring that St Joseph's stands out in the community as a place of excellence with Jesus at its centre.

St Joseph's school has excellent capacity for continued sustained improvement.

## What the school should do to improve further:

- Fully embed the responsive and adaptive teaching strategy in Religious Education lessons.
- Ensure the thorough acquisition of subject specific pedagogy across the Religious Education curriculum.

The Catholic character of the school is clearly evident and embedded in all aspects of school life. The school's aims and values are palpable, the Church's mission in education is modelled by every member of the school community. The Mission Statement 'Through our loving God, we follow in the footsteps of St Joseph who helps us to be gentle, caring and hardworking. As we learn together, we love, value and welcome everyone' is lived by the entire school community. It drives all aspects of school life and can be clearly seen in relationships, service to others, the hard work observed in lessons and the willingness to take on responsibilities.

Pupils are offered a range of opportunities to live out their faith and fully embrace the responsibilities they are offered. They fully appreciate that they have a responsibility to others and take their roles as RE Ambassadors, Buddies and School and Eco Council leaders very seriously. Under the careful guidance of their teachers, they are determined to make a difference not only in the school but also at local, national and international levels. They understand that their role is one of service and commitment. They talk enthusiastically of fund raising events for CAFOD and many other charities and the things they do to take care of their school community such as recycling and planting because the 'Earth is our common home' and 'If we don't look after the world it will die'. They are dedicated to fulfilling Pope Francis' Laudato Si message. Their diocesan pledges show them to be caring, compassionate and considerate young people with a conscience. They are fully active in their determination to make a difference.

Pupil and staff well-being is given a very high priority. The school is a Trauma Perceptive Practice school which provides a whole school approach to securing pupil's well-being and supporting all pupils to be successful. It is also an Autism Awareness School and all teaching staff are aware of how to support the needs of pupils. The school takes advantage of a designated school counsellor and a highly experienced well-being mentor to support pupils in times of need. Pupils speak very warmly of the sensory room and how it provides great support for the most vulnerable pupils. Stanley, the therapy dog, is a welcome visitor to the school and pupils greatly benefit from his presence.

Pupil behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They enjoy school and learning and report that coming to school means they have lots of friends. Pupils genuinely enjoy each other's company, they support each other very well in lessons and ensure that everyone is included and has the opportunity to share their ideas and opinions. During a discussion between older pupils and the inspector about classroom responsibilities, pupils were very quick to include a fellow boy in the discussion and inform the inspector of the importance of his role.

Older pupils acknowledge the support they have received from staff throughout their time in school. They comment that their teachers always remember what they were like when they were younger and frequently give them compliments which one pupil reported 'brightens our day.'

Pupils and parents are highly positive about the pastoral care offered by the school. Pupils comment that the teachers are 'always there for you' and that the school 'makes me constantly happy.' Pastoral programmes, using the diocesan approved Journey in Love scheme and supplemented by Ten Ten resources are carefully planned and delivered to enable pupils to enjoy a curriculum which provides very well for their social, moral and personal growth.

Parents are kept well informed of events in school. They receive weekly newsletters which include the Sunday Gospel as well as the Friday Flier which they say is well laid out and very easy to read. They are also very complementary about the MyEd app which they find very useful. The newly reintegrated invitations to enjoy lunch with their children is also a very popular event.

The governing body is highly ambitious for the Catholic life of the school. They are regular visitors to the school commenting that St Joseph's is a 'living breathing faith community'. They monitor the curriculum carefully, visiting classes, completing work scrutinies, attending assemblies and Mass. Governors have a wide skill set in order to fulfil their responsibilities and this is the result of a deliberate plan to strengthen the board.

Religious Education (RE) is given a high priority at the school. Leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum meets the requirements set by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales that 10% of curriculum time is given over to RE. The school uses the diocesan approved 'Come and See' programme of study.

Pupils achieve very well in Religious Education (RE) and in line with that achieved in the other core subjects. The quality of pupils' work in books is very good and, in many cases, outstanding. Their RE books are beautifully presented and demonstrate the value and respect pupils place on their learning in the subject.

Pupils make very good and in many cases outstanding progress. Pupils with special educational needs are extremely well supported enabling them to make progress which is comparable to their peers. Additional adults are deployed very well and work with pupils to ensure they understand what is expected of them to complete their work and be successful.

Teachers plan lessons which, build on prior knowledge, are creative and which engage and sustain pupils' interest. A wide variety of strategies are used and pupils comment that they appreciate the opportunity to enjoy different activities in RE lessons. Pupil books demonstrate how they have been able to participate in role play, debates, responding to religious art and different types of written activities to showcase their knowledge, understanding and skills. During the inspection Year 2 pupils thoroughly enjoyed a 'conscience alley' activity linked to the story of Goldilocks designed to show their understanding of making choices and an examination of conscience. Older pupils, also considering making choices, enjoyed discussing the 'Parable of the Prodigal Son' through drama. In both classes pupils' enthusiasm was tangible and their progress was outstanding.

Teachers have very high expectations and challenge pupils' thinking. This was clearly seen throughout the school. In upper Key Stage 2 pupils were set the demanding challenge of writing the Beatitudes for the modern era and discussing the fairness of the 'Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard', whilst in lower Key Stage 2 pupils were challenged with questioning Paul on his persecution of Christians. Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage confidently told the inspector that Jesus had followers who were called disciples with one adding that there 'were 12 of them'. In all classes pupils were continually demonstrating their developing religious literacy. Collaboration between groups of pupils was excellent and every pupil remained focused and on task.

Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge; they ask challenging and thought-provoking questions which really test pupils' understanding and move their learning forwards. Continual assessment enables teachers to further challenge or provide additional support for pupils as necessary.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are highly positive, they are focused and attentive in lessons. They approach lessons with enthusiasm and a determination to be successful. They take on board teacher feedback to improve the quality of their work. Collaboration with peers is a strength and pupils work with their partners effectively to continually improve their work.

The leadership of Religious Education is outstanding. The subject leader is highly organised, committed and determined to ensure that pupils and staff are given the tools to be successful. She is passionate about the subject and ensures that she keeps abreast of new developments and resources which she shares with colleagues. Monitoring of RE is rigorous and robust. Topic overviews are held at the start of each topic to enable staff to be familiar with the unit and to share ideas and expectations across the federation. Newly qualified staff and those new to Catholic education are very well supported through lesson observations, work sampling, modelling of lessons by experienced staff and attending diocesan training events. Cross federation, diocesan and mid Essex moderation meetings ensure teacher assessments of pupil work are accurate.

Pupils enjoy learning about other world faiths and a lovely display on Judaism is given a prominent position in the school library.

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school. From an early age, pupils are introduced to and take an active role in prayer and worship. On entry to the school each pupil and new member of staff is given a bespoke prayer book as a welcome gift.

As they journey through the school pupils take on a more active role in preparing, planning and delivering assemblies and liturgies. Class Collective Worship books clearly show that, from a very young age pupils, under the guidance of an adult in Key Stage 1, are thinking deeply about prayers and scripture readings for their class worship times. Pupils are familiar with choosing passages from scripture to enhance their services as well as using the traditional prayers of the church alongside ones from their class prayer boxes.

Class worship is an integral part of life at St Joseph's and has a clear message and purpose. It helps to develop good understanding of the Church's liturgical year.

During the inspection Year 6 RE ambassadors led an excellent assembly for Key Stage 1 on 'Caring for our Common Home'. Pupils read confidently and had carefully chosen age appropriate readings of the creation story. The younger pupils were attentive and focused throughout, being invited by their older peers to become involved in the assembly. One pupil's response to a radio interview question about why they loved the world said that they loved trees because 'they help us to breathe' whilst another said that animals made her happy especially rabbits because 'they hop and I love hopping'. Every pupils' response was valued and respected by their peers. The atmosphere was one of appreciation, thanks and inclusivity with the singing and prayers being enhanced by the use of Makaton. It is clear that pupils enjoy this time of the week as was evidenced by their engagement and reverence.

Praying together is given high priority. Pupils are given the opportunity to pray several times during the day including at noon when every class prays the Angelus. All prayers are pupil led. Prayer takes on different forms and pupils are confident in writing their own prayers. Older pupils enjoy reflection times as they say sitting quietly listening to music and looking at a piece religious art creates a calmness which helps them prepare and focus for their lessons.

Class prayer areas are beautifully maintained and include the correct coloured cloth depending on the time in the liturgical year, a Bible, a religious artefact, flowers, a candle and a prayer box for pupils to place their intentions. During the day pupils will chose prayers from the box to share with peers. Prayer areas provide a place of focus in the classroom. St Joseph's is a praying community.

Opportunities to celebrate Mass are offered at various times throughout the year. Pupils join together in the parish church with members of the parish community and governors to celebrate Mass on Fridays as well as each class attending Mass in the church during the week. The Parish Priest commented on the high quality of pupil responses during Mass.

Pupils also have the opportunity to pray the Rosary during May and October and participate in a reconciliation service. The RE ambassadors lead the Stations of the Cross service during Lent. They celebrate feast days and holy days of obligation in the parish church with staff and pupils working together to prepare the liturgy. Staff provide pupils with excellent role models.