

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**



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 101795

St Joseph's Catholic Junior School
Woodend
Upper Norwood
London
SE19 3NU

Chair of Governors
Headteacher
Inspectors

Mrs Elaine Jones
Mrs Tamsyn Lawlor
Mrs Bernadette Dowswell
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Inspection Date

23 November 2011

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
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Introduction

Description of the school

St Joseph's Catholic Junior school is voluntary aided and is situated in the Croydon Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. The school is maintained by Croydon Local Authority. The principal parishes which the school serves, are Virgo Fidelis, Upper Norwood, St Matthews, West Norwood and St Margaret Clitherow in Dulwich Wood Park. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 99%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is approximately 7% but this varies across the classes.

The school takes pupils from 7 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 239. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is around average. Around 22% of the pupils receive extra support in class. The pupils come from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds with large numbers from Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds. There are a number of pupils from Portuguese, Polish and Spanish families.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

St Joseph's is a good and rapidly improving school with some strong features that identify it as a living Catholic community based on the Gospel values of love, respect and forgiveness. The school has experienced a period of uncertainty recently following the retirement of the previous Headteacher and the federation of the school with St Joseph's Infant school in September 2011. The Headteacher is using her experience as Headteacher of the Infant school to build a strong and cohesive team. Under her strong and sensitive leadership, all are keen to raise standards. The newly formed governing body benefits from an experienced Chair and a link governor who is one of the parish priests. The Governing Body is totally committed to the federation and works closely with the Headteacher and senior staff to introduce new initiatives and secure improvement. The school's ethos is warm, supportive and inclusive and the sense of community within the school is particularly strong. Throughout the school, pupils make steady and sometimes good progress due to good teaching and the commitment of staff to their pupils' spiritual and moral development. Parents are very committed to the school and after some initial concerns regarding the federation, seem energised by the change and are very supportive. The issues identified in the previous report have been partially addressed. The subject leader has reviewed and amended the policy for religious education, which now covers all phases across both schools. The school acknowledges that the assessment process is at an early stage of development but work on this has already started and inspectors are confident that this will move forward rapidly. The strong commitment and determination of the Headteacher, senior staff and governors and their thorough evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development ensure that the school has a very good capacity to improve.

Grade 2

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

- Review immediately the time allocation for the teaching of religious education, the length of lessons and the position of lessons in the school day.
- Use the information gained from the planned development in assessment to track individual pupil progress and plan for individual need, so that it begins to make a positive impact on attainment.
- Share the good practice in the teaching of religious education in the school by developing a structure of peer lesson observations.

The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

Grade 2

Since September 2011, St Joseph's Infant and Junior schools have been formed into a hard federation with one Headteacher and one governing body. In the very short time since her appointment at the Junior school the Headteacher, together with the new senior leadership team has moved the school forward, dealing positively and sympathetically with the introduction of change. She has a clear vision of Catholic education and in her calm, affirming way is leading the school forward and empowering her staff to deliver the very best for the pupils. The strong Catholic ethos is evident in the high quality artefacts, particularly the beautiful statues and crosses and the attractive displays, such as those in the hall on the Last Supper and Fishers of Men. The Mission Statement clearly drives the work of the school and pupils are very aware of their own simplified version. Plans are in place for a review of the statement involving governors, staff and parents from both schools as well as the School Council. Pupils love their school and are very proud of it. The school's relationship with parents is a strength. They feel welcome in the school and appreciate the sense of community. One parent wrote, "There are great links to local parishes and good involvement for parents to attend acts of worship". Parents show their support for the school by assisting voluntarily in many ways, helping on trips and involvement in an active association. Clergy from the local parishes which the school serves visit the school. The link governor for religious education, who is one of the priests, visits regularly and supports the religious education teaching in the classroom. His support and expertise are greatly appreciated by the staff. Governors are fully supportive and take a keen interest in the school's work. They undertake training on issues such as chairing committees and being a critical friend. Through the work of the Curriculum committee, and the Ethos, Discipline and Relationship committee, they are well informed and involved in decision making.

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

Grade 2

There are good arrangements for pupils to take part in acts of worship through a varied programme, which includes assemblies, Masses and special liturgies. The assembly seen during the inspection was led by a Year 5 class and based on the Ten Commandments. All pupils were involved in reading, role play, song and an excellent power point presentation, which was presented by one pupil. The message of the assembly was clear and related well to pupils' own experiences. A large number of parents and friends were present and also several governors. Prayer is at the heart of the school community and a natural part of the school day. Pupils are given the opportunity to experience a wide variety of prayer forms, including the traditional prayers of the Church, spontaneous prayer and silent and reflective prayer. Pupils compose their own prayers and there were examples of sensitively written prayers in books and focal areas. Prayer areas are evident in all classes and these are simple, attractive and in many classes provide a focus for the prayer life of the class.

Opportunities for prayer and reflection are given in religious education lessons. Pupils attend Mass in the school hall or the church on special occasions such as the beginning and end of the school year and the feast of St Joseph. There are special year group Masses for Year 3 after they have made their First Holy Communion and for Year 6 before they leave the school. The subject leader has created a Power Point presentation, which is used during Mass to help all present with the new Mass responses. Pupils experience a variety of other liturgies during the year, for example the May procession and Easter assembly and the Stations of the Cross through dance. This wide programme of worship makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Community Cohesion

Grade 2

Pupils at St Joseph's come from a wide range of social, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and all are welcomed and valued equally. In the words of one pupil, 'Our school is like one big family; we are all sisters and brothers'. Pupils are warm and friendly, showing their support for each other through initiatives such as playground pals and buddy class partners. Relationships in the school are very good and pupils feel safe and certain that there is always someone to listen to them. Each week a group of pupils sit at the 'top table' and have lunch with the Headteacher. Pupils feel they have a strong voice through the School Council, which meets fortnightly and has been instrumental to improvements in equipment, hygiene and clubs. There are good arrangements for transition from the Infant school to the Junior school and Year 6 pupils are well prepared for life in Secondary school. The diversity of the school community is celebrated through such events as International week, where parents organise workshops and tasting of a wide variety of foods. Provision for pupils before and after school is organised by a private provider but in liaison with the school. This provision enables working parents to know that their children are in a safe place and are happy and well cared for in familiar surroundings. There is regular involvement with other local schools through many sporting and musical events and festivals. The school contributes positively to local parish, deanery and diocesan life, through visits, meetings, Masses and conferences. Pupils contribute enthusiastically to a variety of charities, including CAFOD, the poppy appeal and Macmillan nurses. Of particular note are the 90 shoeboxes they filled for the 'Samaritan's Purse' charity. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of issues such as world poverty is developed mainly through the use of CAFOD materials, which are used very well in the school. The school now needs to consider ways to extend pupils' understanding and knowledge of the wider national and international communities, perhaps through links with other schools. The subject leader has established a structure and timetable for the learning of other faiths, which will ensure pupils, learn about and value the beliefs of others in a systematic way.

Religious education

Achievement and standards in religious education

Grade 2

The majority of pupils enter the school with skills and abilities in line with national expectations and almost all transfer from St Joseph's Infant School. A growing number of pupils have English as an additional language and a few are at the early stages of learning English. Pupils are developing a good knowledge of Scripture and their Catholic faith. Pupils in a Year 3 class could explain the story and meaning of the Annunciation and the place of Mary in our own lives. Those in a Year 4 class knew about Abraham and Moses and were beginning to learn about Zechariah and his importance. From speaking with pupils and work in some books, it appears that the majority of pupils make steady progress in religious education and some make good progress. Pupils in a Year 6 class were working at a good standard. All pupils' oral skills are developing well because teachers give them time to talk and express their ideas and opinions. Pupils with additional needs are appropriately supported by committed and hardworking teaching assistants. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work, are keen to learn and participate with enthusiasm. The work in pupils' books shows that pupils are given opportunities to present their work in a variety of ways and there is some work of a high standard, however the written work varies in quantity and quality with some books being excellent and others showing limited coverage and poorer presentation. The school is aware of this inconsistency and strategies are being put in place to ensure improvement.

Teaching and learning in religious education

Grade 2

Overall the quality of teaching is good with very good features in some lessons. All lessons observed had learning objectives and success criteria, which are shared with pupils. Lessons are well organised and excellent use is made of the interactive whiteboard (IWB) to provide a focus for pupils and to stimulate and maintain their interest. Teachers establish friendly, supportive relationships with their class and manage their pupils very well. Most lessons seen had a good balance between teacher input and pupil activity and the pace of lessons is good. Occasionally the pace slowed, which resulted in pupils losing interest and going off task. Some teachers employed very good questioning to probe pupils' understanding and challenge them to think. All teachers observed had very good subject knowledge. A strength of teaching observed was the way teachers ensured that what their pupils were learning was related to their everyday life and helped them make the connection between faith and life. Plenary sessions were used well to recap on the learning objective. Some teachers created a prayerful atmosphere and used this time for pupils to reflect either on what they had been learning or inviting them to share prayers spontaneously. The school has recently introduced a clear and specific marking policy to include religious education and the impact of this is beginning to be seen in pupils' books. All work is marked carefully with positive comments usually related to the learning objective. There is some evidence of marking which will extend pupils' learning and help them

know what to do to improve further. When the marking policy is fully embedded in practice, marking should have a more positive influence on pupil progress. Since September the new subject leader has reviewed assessment procedures and she is beginning to implement a structured system of assessment, much of it based on Assessment for Learning strategies. Pupil progress will be tracked and should enable teachers to plan for individual need and identify any under achievement. Time is needed for these procedures to be fully implemented and become a normal part of school practice, but when fully embedded they will have a direct impact on attainment.

The religious education curriculum

Grade 2

A well balanced curriculum based on 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' religious education programme and supported by good policies for Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship education promotes pupils' all round development and contributes significantly to their spiritual and moral development. The school is aware that in some classes insufficient time is allocated to the teaching of religious education and in others the position of the subject in the school day and the length of lessons need to be reviewed. This issue needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency. Teachers plan their lessons well and the system of planning in year groups ensures consistency, facilitates the sharing of ideas and expertise and gives further support to newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school. The way teachers build lessons on the prior attainment of their pupils is a strength and greatly reinforces learning. While teachers use a range of strategies to teach the subject, the school is now keen to introduce a more creative approach in order to stimulate and challenge pupils further. In lessons observed teaching assistants were well deployed and their sensitive input and active participation supported the learning and progress of pupils with additional needs. There were some good links with other subjects, particularly literacy, ICT and Art. In a Year 6 lesson pupils were using their literacy skills and ICT to design posters for a charity and they discussed persuasive slogans and text and the impact of font size and style. In a Year 5 class, pupils had used ICT to make Power Point presentations of child friendly versions of the ten commandments to share with their twinned Nursery Class. One of the parish priests who is the link governor, supports teachers in their teaching of various religious education topics and visits classrooms to talk to the pupils. His input and expertise are greatly appreciated by all. The school's policy for sex and relationship education is clearly set in the context of Catholic values and takes note of diocesan guidelines. There is a good range of extra curricular activities, which supplements all that pupils learn in school and enables their interests, talents and potential to be developed further.

Leadership and management are good at all levels and improving rapidly. The new subject leader, who is already experienced in the role in the infant school, together with the Headteacher and assistant headteacher, form a cohesive team. They are strongly committed to promoting the faith development of pupils, to raising standards and ensuring that the subject has a high profile in the school. They are well supported by governors and priests who all share a common vision for the federation of St Joseph's Infant and Junior schools. The subject leader has a clear and detailed action plan, which covers many aspects of teaching and learning and the Catholic and Sacramental life of the school. As the subject leader for both schools, improvements and developments across all phases will ensure greater consistency of practice. Governors take an active role through the involvement of the Chair and the work of the committees. Staff are well supported both formally and informally and through staff meetings and training days, which are sometimes shared with other Catholic schools in the deanery or the local cluster. This term, training and support have been provided on assessment and the new Mass responses. Monitoring of the Catholic life of the school and teaching and learning is seen as crucial in the drive to improve the quality of provision for all pupils. In this first term, monitoring has included learning walks, prayer areas, planning and scrutiny of books. Shared lesson observation with the assistant headteacher has also started to take place. Feedback is given to staff after any monitoring and in time this focussed monitoring should have an impact on raising standards in teaching and learning. The school is part of an active cluster of local Catholic schools and subject leaders who meet regularly for mutual support and to share good practice. The school has had support from a diocesan adviser and the subject leader attends meetings when possible. Parents are kept informed of the Catholic life of the school and invited to assemblies, Masses and liturgies through the Headteacher's newsletter. At the beginning of the year they are informed of topics to be taught in religious education but when time allows consideration could be given to providing more detailed information on a termly basis. The subject leader has carried out a full audit of resources and purchased a variety of new resources, including San Salvadorian crosses, fabric and artefacts for the teaching of other faiths. She is to be commended for the excellent organisation of the resources, which makes access easy for staff and sets the resources around a focal altar.