

Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for
St Joseph's RC Primary School, Birkenhead

URN: 146088

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Mark Davies, Bishop of Shrewsbury on:

Date: 23 - 24 March 2023

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The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- Pupils, staff, and governors understanding of, and commitment to, the core mission and values of St Joseph's is evident in all they do; the mission is lived.
- St Joseph's provides excellent pastoral care for its community where pupils and families feel included, supported, and cared for.
- Staff provide excellent role models; the strength of relationships, welcome and care for all bears witness to the mission statement.
- The well-planned curriculum supports and enhances the Catholic ethos of the school.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, as is their concern for others.

What the school needs to improve:

- Leaders and governors should ensure that the new assessment procedures are fully embedded and provide support for staff in implementing these.
- Ensure that connections with Catholic Social Teaching are fully identified across all curriculum areas so that there are specific links to actions and impact.
- The quality and impact of the school's prayer and liturgy should be reviewed regularly including through pupil voice.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1



Pupils at St. Joseph's are justly proud of their school. They clearly understand and embrace the school's Catholic identity. In conversations, they refer to the school's mission statement, 'Love one another as I have loved you,' its motto, 'Stepping up to achieve excellence,' and the core values, embodied in the name of their patron, Saint Joseph the Worker: Worship, Opportunity, Resilience, Knowledge, Enjoyment, Respect. Pupils readily explain how they strive to live the mission in their daily lives, for example, by taking on leadership roles within the school as prayer leaders, as Mini Vinnies and as prefects. Their responses to others' needs, both within their school community and beyond, clearly demonstrate their deep concern and commitment. Pupils speak of the love and care provided by the school community, including access to calm, safe places and how this helps them get ready to learn. Pupils feel happy, confident, and secure. A parent commented, 'this school has been supportive in so many ways to help my little girl grow into her own person'. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school; they show deep respect for themselves and others in their conversations and in their actions.

The mission statement is known, lived, and witnessed throughout the school. The excellent relationships and culture of welcome in the school evidence a real sense of community. Staff are exemplary role models who bear witness daily to the Church's mission. St Joseph's offers the highest level of pastoral care and its pupils flourish in this environment. There is a clear commitment to supporting pupils and families, especially the most vulnerable and those from other cultures and traditions. Parents and governors comment that staff, 'go the extra mile'. For example, attending the baptisms of pupils after school and offering practical support to families such as a successful 'Freecycle' shop, offering uniform, shoes, and seasonal clothes. Support staff are available in the playground, and there is a weekly opportunity for parents to socialise, and to speak with agencies

who can offer advice and support. Many staff have been with the school for a long time and those new to the school say they are welcomed and supported. Throughout the school its Catholic identity is evident in the inspirational murals by a local artist, and in displays, which nurture the aspirations of its pupils. The school's provision for relationships and health education meets statutory and diocesan requirements.

Leaders ensure that Christ is truly at the heart of all they do; they are fully committed to the Catholic life and mission of the school. One governor spoke about the Catholic ethos as, 'not a box to be ticked', but that it is, 'impossible to separate as it is marbled through everything'. Most governors are recent appointments; they value the support of the Multi Academy Trust (MAT) and the diocese. School leaders and governors are proactive in ensuring staff are fully supported and encouraged to undertake professional development. This is evident by the number of staff with the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) and those who are about to undertake this, including those not of the Catholic faith. Induction of new staff is a strength. The well-being of staff is considered carefully, with the school providing both practical and emotional support. Leaders and governors take account of pupils' views and work with them to make positive changes. The whole school curriculum is carefully structured to reflect the ways in which the Catholic faith has enriched culture, and this now needs to be fully embedded. There is an excellent relationship between the parish and the school; the parish priest and deacons are frequent and welcome visitors.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

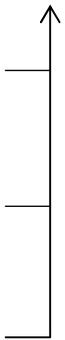
The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

2



Pupils talk enthusiastically about their learning in religious education. In lessons, they demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding, and almost all pupils are religiously literate. Pupils concentrate well, ask good questions, and engage well with adults and peers, which enables them to make sense of, and remember, what they have learnt. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils readily discuss how scripture encourages us to care for God's creation and for each other. Curriculum initiatives such as, 'Creative, Collaborative' support and develop pupils' engagement and responses to their learning. Self-assessment sheets for each topic, and marking by their teachers, help pupils to think more deeply. More consistent marking and feedback would enable all pupils to make progress more quickly. Pupils' work is well presented, and now needs to be more consistent across the school. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards in religious education are good and are comparable with other core subjects. To achieve the best possible outcomes, pupils now need more opportunities to become confident, independent learners. Parents are happy with the teaching of religious education and one commented, 'We are delighted with the biblical knowledge and understanding which our children gain in school.'

Across all phases, teachers display good subject knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn, and almost all pupils make good progress. Self-assessment at the beginning of topics allows planning to be adapted to pupils' needs. Teachers demonstrate a deep commitment to religious education and have high expectations of their pupils. In the best lessons observed, teachers use questioning to determine pupil understanding, and adapt the pace and content to support learning. Feedback to pupils in lessons and in their work allows pupils to think more deeply and to make good progress but this needs to be more consistent across the school. Teachers give pupils a variety of ways in which they can present their work creatively. However, a clear progression of skills will support pupils in achieving work of a consistently high quality. In lessons, other adults are used to

good effect, supporting pupils through relevant questioning and by modelling. A more consistent approach to skillful questioning will help identify pupils' understanding and extend their knowledge. Pupils' work is celebrated in lessons and in weekly assemblies, motivating pupils to do well. High quality resources are used to good effect in lessons and displays. Assessment is regular and is moderated through collaboration with cluster primary schools.

Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum is in keeping with the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* and complies with diocesan requirements. At least ten per cent of taught curriculum time is allocated to religious education. Visits and practical experiences enhance pupil learning. Leaders and governors are deeply committed to religious education, ensuring the provision of regular high quality professional development from the subject leader, the MAT and the diocese. Staff appreciate how the deeply committed religious education lead supports them with updates, training, and weekly emails. They say, 'Formal and informal partnerships are solid, and there is widespread respect for all that the religious education lead does.' A comprehensive induction programme ensures that new staff feel very well supported. As a result, teaching across the school is at least good, and some is outstanding. Teachers plan religious education to meet the needs of all groups of pupils. Explicit links with other curriculum areas help pupils to make connections and increase their knowledge. However, this should be developed further. Leaders and governors' monitoring of religious education is systematic and informs future strategic planning. Governors offer challenge as well as support and ensure religious education has high priority throughout the school.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

Pupils readily engage in the prayer life of the school. In discussions with inspectors, pupils report that they enjoy their times of prayer together. They are very proud to be prayer leaders and to share their faith with others. Pupils pray confidently together as a group, class, or school community. According to their age, pupils are supported by adults in planning and leading engaging prayer and liturgy. Pupils work well collaboratively using relevant scripture, artefacts, and music to encourage reflection and response from their peers. From an early age, pupils are encouraged to evaluate their experiences of prayer and liturgy and how prayer influences their daily lives and helps them think about their responses to others' needs. For instance, after a pupil led liturgical prayer involving the parable of the Good Samaritan, pupils could give examples of how to follow Jesus, 'be helpful, be caring, be kind, show love', and this enables them to discuss how prayer and reflection help to support them in living out the school's, and the church's, mission. However, older pupils need more opportunities to plan independently and use their own ideas.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of this school. Pupils and staff readily engage with prayer and liturgy. Advent and Lenten prayer trails support and enhance pupils' experiences of prayer, which pupils remember and discuss. Strong links between home and school extend this learning. One parent said, 'My children really enjoyed bringing the travelling crib home at Christmas and the travelling cross home this Easter...this was a lovely idea and allowed us as a family to reflect on these special times.' Celebrations of the Eucharist prepared by individual classes, 'Stay and Pray' sessions, and significant celebrations such as Stations of the Cross, created by pupils, offer the whole community an opportunity to actively participate in prayer. Staff say they are, 'more confident in conducting and discussing daily prayer and liturgy.' Senior leaders and staff are confident and skilled models of good practice for other staff and pupils. Staff should now be supported in developing their understanding of the different forms of prayer and liturgy, to enhance the

experience for those taking part. The peaceful prayer garden, tended by a member of the support staff, commemorates a past pupil, and is used regularly for quiet reflection and prayer. Spaces in and around the school support the school's Catholic identity and mission and further opportunities to develop these should be sought.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy provides a clear structure for developing skills, enabling staff to become more familiar and confident in leading and participating in prayer and liturgy. One said, 'Since our last inspection, both staff and pupils are more confident in conducting and discussing daily prayer and liturgy.' At key times during the year, the Eucharist and Reconciliation are celebrated, offering opportunities for links with the parish community, which parents and the parish appreciate. Leaders and governors provide professional development for staff in planning and delivering prayer and liturgy and staff understand and embrace its importance to the life of the school. The religious education lead is fully committed to supporting and developing prayer and liturgy and ensuring that it is of the highest quality. The head of school and governors promote many opportunities for the whole school community to engage in prayer and liturgy, providing high quality resources and support to ensure there is time for pupils, parents, and staff to pray and reflect. The quality and impact of the school's prayer and liturgy should now be reviewed by leaders and governors to inform their strategic planning. They should also seek pupils' views on this.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	146088
Full postal address of the school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Woodchurch Road, Prenton, CH43 5UT
School phone number	0151 652 6781
Name of head teacher or principal	Mr Alexander Turner, Head of School Mr Stephen Jevons, Executive Head
Chair of governing board	Mrs Clare McNicholas
School Website	www.stjosephscatholicprimarybirkenhead.co.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Holy Family Multi Academy Trust
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Trustees	Diocese of Shrewsbury
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	15 March 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Carol Morgan	Lead inspector
Michael Glynn	Team inspector
Name of inspector	Lead/team
Name of inspector	Lead/team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement

