



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 100832

St Joseph's RC Primary School
George Row
London
SE16 4UP

Inspection date: 6 February 2017

Chair of Governors: Sister Jude Groden
Headteacher: Mark Macauley
Inspectors: Tom Cahill
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EDUCATION COMMISSION

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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St Joseph's is a voluntary aided Catholic school. It is situated in the Cathedral Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark and is maintained by Southwark LA. The principal parish that the school serves is The Most Holy Trinity, Dockhead. Approximately 50% of pupils come from this parish. The proportion of pupils who are catholic is 90%. The proportion of curriculum time allocated to Religious Education is at least 10% in each key stage.

The school has a long history of providing Catholic education in the area and has been based on its current site since 1912. The school was established by the Sisters of Mercy. They are still involved with the school and are represented on the governing body. They are also regular visitors to the school even though the school is now in the trusteeship of the Archdiocese of Southwark.

The school takes pupils from 3 to 11 years of age. The number of pupils currently on roll is 344.

The prior attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of Special Education Needs (SEN) or Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is below average.

The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is 20%, which is below the local average and has decreased since the last inspection reflecting the changing demographics of the local area and the regeneration taking place in this part of London. Pupils at the school come from diverse backgrounds. The largest groups of pupils are from Black African and White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who come from homes where English is an additional language is 50%. More than 22 different languages are spoken by pupils attending the school.

St Joseph's is a designated teaching school and is at the hub of the Catholic Schools' Teaching Alliance. This alliance promotes the development of the Catholic ethos and school improvement across a range of Catholic primary and secondary schools within the Diocese.

Key for inspection grades

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

St Joseph's is an outstanding Catholic school and continues to provide an exceptional Catholic education to its pupils who thrive in the nurturing ethos. Prayer is central to the life of the school, which offers a stimulating, and challenging learning environment to all its pupils. The school has excellent facilities for all pupils including those who need additional support. Classrooms are very well resourced and the standard of displays is exceptionally high. The school has fully addressed the recommendations of the previous inspection report that also assessed the school as outstanding.

The highly experienced Headteacher provides outstanding leadership to his staff and pupils and he is highly regarded by the whole of the school community. He has managed to recruit and retain high quality teachers and support staff many of whom are Catholic. He is ably supported by a small but highly experienced senior leadership team. As the spiritual leader in the school, he is an excellent role model to all stakeholders and has a very clear vision for his Catholic school, which is fully supported by all staff. He works tirelessly to ensure the pupils achieve the best possible outcomes and that pupils and parents fully understand the Catholic vision of the school. Families in the school community appreciate the extra support and guidance the Headteacher often provides.

The pupils are excellent ambassadors for their school and their behaviour was impeccable throughout the inspection. Their behaviour and positive attitudes make a significant contribution to the impressive learning environment from which they benefit.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive as shown by the very high number of inspection questionnaires returned, many of which had additional comments made by parents praising the school and its staff. As one parent wrote, "St Joseph's is an amazing school. All the adults are loving and caring and always put the children first and encourage each student to do their best." Another parent wrote "St Joseph's is an absolutely excellent Catholic school and I cannot rate it highly enough." Many other comments expressed similar sentiments. Parents are kept fully informed through a regular newsletter as well as through the school website. Families are also provided with a copy of 'Wednesday Word' each week, which is funded by the school. Parents also appreciated the support provided to their families by the school's Parent and Toddler Club.

The small governing body is highly effective in holding the school to account by providing a strong blend of challenge and support. Governors work closely with the Headteacher and other school leaders to ensure the Catholic ethos of the school is both protected and enhanced and influences all that happens in the school each day. They know the many strengths of the school and the areas of further development.

The school has links with its home parish but also receives support from priests from surrounding parishes, including from St George's Cathedral.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- Ensure that the newly appointed coordinator for Religious Education receives support from the Diocesan Advisory team and has the opportunity to work with other coordinators in local deanery Catholic schools.

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

Pupils derive huge benefit from being part of St Joseph's inclusive school community and parents greatly value the fact their children attend the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school as shown by the very high levels of attendance and have excellent relationships with their teachers who in turn provide them with exceptional pastoral care. Their exemplary behaviour and positive attitudes to learning make a significant contribution to the distinctly Catholic ethos of the school.

The pupils know and understand the school's mission statement that is displayed in a unique cruciform in every area of the school. It clearly influences every aspect of their daily school life. The pupils eagerly participate in prayer and Collective Worship and are clearly very proud of their school. They respond particularly well to the clear daily routines of school life and develop a clear sense of right and wrong. At the end of Year 6, the pupils receive a copy of the mission statement stamped 'Mission Achieved'.

Pupils' learning is also enhanced by the many trips offered by the school. These trips include the local Mercy Heritage Centre, a local synagogue, temple and visit from local rabbi. Pupils in Year 6 also attend the annual retreat to Aylesford Priory.

Pupils are also offered a wide range of opportunities to take on roles of responsibility and to develop their leadership skills. These opportunities include membership of the school Council, school prefects and altar servers. The pupils are also involved in a wide range of charitable activities to support those who are in need locally, nationally and internationally. They have raised significant funds for children at the Evelina Hospital, for a local homeless charity, Age Concern and the Ivor Leigh Memorial School in Sierra Leone which the school helped to build through its fund raising activities. The memorial school was founded by the family of past pupils.

Overall St. Joseph's ensures that the spiritual moral social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

Pupils make exceptional progress in Religious Education and their achievement is outstanding. Despite joining the school with attainment levels below the national average, they very quickly make very good progress as a result of outstanding teaching they receive together with their exceptional and very mature attitudes to learning. Results in Religious Education are at least as good as those in English and Maths, which are significantly above the local and national averages. These results are therefore outstanding especially taking into account the below average attainment of the pupils on entry to the school.

Pupils made clear to the inspectors they enjoyed their Religious Education lessons. They enjoyed the varied learning styles encouraged by their teachers including paired work and role play. They also spoke highly of the positive relationships with their teachers in Religious Education lessons.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

Pupils at St Joseph's participate in the many forms of Collective Worship offered by the school. They are always sincere, prayerful and their mature behaviour makes every act of Collective Worship something special and memorable.

In the school assembly seen during the inspection, the pupils entered the hall hands clasped in prayer and silent reflection as did all the adults present. The pupils were involved in the readings and the lighting of a candle which reinforced the theme of the assembly-The Light of Christ.

Prayer is central to the daily experience of the pupils. Prayers are said at least four times a day including before and after lunch. Pupils can often be seen in silent prayer as they enter the assembly hall.

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How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leaders and governors ensure the Catholic life of the school is a top priority. Their outstanding cohesive leadership is a great strength of the school. They ensure all staff are fully supported in developing the Catholic life through high quality INSET provided both within the school and through the links established by the local Teaching School Alliance in which the school plays a leading role.

The priorities for the future development of the Catholic life of the school are clearly expressed in the school's development plan. These plans are well resourced as reflected in the high quality artefacts and religious icons around the school. This includes a beautiful cross made from the ceramic poppies previously displayed at the Tower of London and now displayed in the main hall.

Governors are frequent visitors to the school and understand their responsibilities in relation to developing the Catholic life of the school. They monitor the Catholic provision both formally and informally by attending a wide range of events at the school and during their committee meetings.

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils

The coordinator for Religious Education has only recently been appointed but she has been at the school for many years. She is very well supported by the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Assistant Head. To ensure Religious Education continues to improve, it is important she receives support from the Diocesan Advisory team and that she is able to share good practice with other local Religious Education coordinators.

The Headteacher and other leaders regularly carry out lesson observations, which show teaching of Religious Education to be consistently outstanding as was seen during the inspection. Teachers of Religious Education have excellent subject knowledge, which provides challenge for the pupils. The governors are provided with regular updates regarding the progress and outcomes of the pupils in Religious Education.

Assessment is strength of the school and detailed records are used to ensure all pupils make at least expected progress although clearly almost all pupils make better than expected progress.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was outstanding and this matched the evidence from the school's own monitoring programme. Teaching is outstanding and lessons are designed to encourage pupils to think deeply about each topic covered. Excellent use is made of ICT to enhance the learning experience of the pupils. The school also allocates significant funding for the purchase of resources for Religious Education.

In an outstanding Year 6 lesson seen during the inspection, the pupils were studying Ramadan. The pupils were able to discuss the 5 Pillars of Islam having covered the topic in a prior lesson. They showed a mature understanding of Islamic beliefs and their understanding was further enhanced when a member of the class, who is a Muslim, was able to explain how Ramadan affected her own family life. Pupils listened respectfully and were inquisitive to know more. The excellent behaviour and strong positive relationships between pupils and teachers was evident in the lesson. Teaching assistants were used effectively in lessons to ensure weaker pupils were supported and enabled to make good progress.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning

The school follows the 'Come and See' Religious Education programme and together with additional resources provide by teachers meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory as well as the needs of the pupils. Work is appropriately differentiated to ensure pupils are challenged and that every pupil can achieve their potential. The school allocates at least 10% of curriculum time for Religious Education in accordance with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.

The pupils' knowledge of other faiths was particularly impressive as was their knowledge of the Catholic faith.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding and is at the heart of school life. It is always well planned and meets the need of all the pupils. The themes follow the liturgical year and pupils have a very good understanding of the main Christian celebrations. Opportunities are provided for private worship in class, in assemblies and liturgies. Each classroom has a well-maintained focal point for prayer and pupils are encouraged to write their own prayers, which are displayed around the school. Parents are invited to attend assemblies and value this opportunity to share in the prayer life of the school.