



INSPECTION REPORT

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

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DfE Number: 933/3402

Executive Head of School: Mrs Helen Taylor

Chair of Governors: Mr Allan Paver

**Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

Date of inspection: 22-23rd February 2017

Date of previous inspection: March 2014

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington

Additional Inspector: Mrs Carol Baron

Description of the school

St. Joseph's is a larger than average Catholic primary school, situated in the centre of Burnham close to the parish church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs. There are 232 pupils on roll, of whom 17% are baptised Catholics. A lower than national average of 4.6% come from ethnic minority backgrounds, mainly Polish and Tagalog speakers. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs make up 11% of the number on roll. Around 11.3% of the children are disadvantaged compared to 25.2% national average. Prior attainment on entry to the school matches national expectation. The head of school has been in post since September 2016.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 2

This is a good school because

- It is a fully inclusive school where pupils from all faiths and none are made welcome. The governing body and school leaders are fully committed to the promotion and nurturing of the school's Catholic life and mission, and have put in place increasingly effective and robust processes to monitor improvement. As a result, the provision for both Catholic life and religious education is now good.
- The pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. They demonstrate real care and respect for each other, and their positive attitude to learning results in good progress, both in lessons and over time.
- Leadership provides effective guidance and support to staff, making use more frequently of outside resources, advice, and diocesan training in its drive to develop and improve provision and outcomes for the majority of pupils.
- The quality of teaching is good, resulting in good learning and achievement. Where there are weaker areas or inconsistent practice, the school is taking effective, supportive action to raise all teaching to the level of the best.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is good

- The school clearly knows its strengths and weaknesses. Its self- evaluation documents are comprehensive and honest, enabling focussed action to improve practice and outcomes. The governing body has taken recent steps to keep itself up to date with the day to day life of the school, and is becoming a more challenging body.
- The areas for development noted in the last inspection have been systematically addressed. There are more rigorous, robust and dependable processes for monitoring Catholic life and RE, a sharper concern to raise standards of achievement and attainment which has already raised the quality of RE outcomes, and a closer, fruitful partnership with the diocese making full use of its support and advice.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give the pupils more ownership of their learning, so that lessons become less teacher led, and pupils challenged to make real intellectual effort.
- Increase the effectiveness of the marking of pupils' work by improving the quality of the teacher formative comments, as well as the length and quality of the pupils' responses.
- Focus with renewed urgency on the animating role of the chaplaincy team, but also speed the introduction of the Leader in Faith programme, so that every child becomes a proactive contributor to the Catholic life of the school.

How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?

Grade 2

a) The extent to which pupils understand, contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school

- The chaplaincy team, originally set up in 2014, has been extended and represents every year group in KS2. It is beginning to take the lead in promoting the prayer life of the school, and developing the skills of planning and organising their own liturgies. There now needs to be a real push to raise the chaplaincy profile so that they can practise the relevant skills with greater frequency and become real animators throughout the school;
- They have already taken responsibility for the prayer tables in the classrooms, and during the inspection Year 5 chaplains planned and presented a short reflective session, which was a positive experience. They are excellent role models especially for the younger children. One pupil remarked on their commissioning service in the cathedral that they felt part of a wider family, and 'it was nice to meet up with other Catholic children';
- Pupils have a growing understanding of what it means to be in a Catholic school and what makes it different from other schools. They accept and flourish in an atmosphere of faith and spirituality. Their own composed prayers, displayed on the prayer focus in each classroom, are very thoughtful and heartfelt. They can articulate the impact that the prayer life of the school has on their view of life and their relationship with others. As one pupil put it: 'If people saw us on the playground they would notice how considerate of each other we are'. All pupils are able to contribute their ideas to the current on going formal review of the school's Mission Statement. The mission of the school is frequently discussed and has become part of their lives. The weekly award assembly is highly significant and speaks of the real values inculcated by the school, and rewards what is held important by the school community;
- Pupils contribute significantly through their response to questionnaires, providing essential feedback, which is built into improvement plans for Catholic life and RE. Their outstanding politeness, cheerfulness and concerned care for others are an exemplary strength of the school. They are ready to take on the Leader in Faith programme which should be implemented without delay;
- Pupils increasingly take on a range of responsibilities, which show they are alert to the needs of others, and have many opportunities to exercise their generosity towards others. For instance, they play an important role in raising money for charities both locally and further globally. They have raised substantial sums of money for the NSPCC and a local charity In Charlie's Memory, as well as CAFOD and links to a school in Kenya;
- Pupils have a genuine respect for those from different backgrounds. This is due to a growing understanding of different faiths, which they have studied and reflected on in RE. There is a real sense of belonging here shared by all regardless of faith or none;
- The links with the parish are strong, despite the small number of Catholic children. They contribute to and participate in parish life and liturgies, and have a deepening

understanding the Church's wider mission and its sacramental life, especially through the study of Baptism, Ordination, and Holy Communion.

b) How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Pupils come from a variety of faith backgrounds and practice. Most enter the school at levels of attainment and understanding of religious knowledge and practice, which are in line with expectation. The school has now established a baseline assessment of each child's starting point. They make good progress from the start, especially in Early Years where the children have an excellent introduction to RE through story, prayer and reflection, so that by the end of Key Stage 1 the majority are making good progress in relation to their starting points. The more able pupils are able to write at some length. The less able occasionally struggle to complete tasks which are too difficult for them;
- At the end of Key Stage 2, the vast majority of pupils are meeting their targets and making good progress in relation to their starting points. Their written work indicates good progress over time, in particular their grasp of meaning and relevance, and learning from religion. Other groups such as those with SEN and disadvantaged pupils, make similar good progress because of effectively planned interventions and the pro-active support of learning assistants;
- Discussions with pupils and responses in their written work show clearly that, as they move up the school, they become more confident in using religious language in a meaningful way. Their ability to learn independently, and with others, is on occasion cramped by learning which is primarily teacher led, or learning objectives and tasks which are not challenging enough, and therefore inevitably block or cap further upward progress;
- Pupils are, however, proud of their achievements and demonstrate a positive interest in learning new ideas, and feel confident enough to express their own opinions. This is evident where there is good practice and challenging questioning. When asked, pupils were positive about RE lessons, and are ready to be involved and challenged especially through art, drama, and more imaginative responses;
- Pupils are able to think spiritually, ethically and theologically, and make links between what they are learning and its relevance to their own lives. Their outstanding conduct in lessons and around the school reflects the extent to which they have internalised the values promoted by the school.

c) How well pupils lead, respond to and participate in the Prayer Life of the School

- All pupils irrespective of faith background participate fully, and feel included, in collective worship. They show reverence, attentiveness, and willingness to play their part, singing with great enthusiasm. The chaplaincy team are on the threshold of becoming more involved in the planning and preparation of their liturgies and assemblies. Their example and positive role modelling are already acting as a witness to others.
- The pupils value the many prayer opportunities during the school day, be it at the beginning of every lesson or the end of the day. They compose their own heartfelt

prayers and reflections, displayed on the prayer tables. The sacramental and liturgical life of the school is reflected in the assemblies, the class Masses in the nearby parish church, and the celebrations throughout the Church's liturgical year of the life of Jesus, and the saints;

- Pupils are beginning to pool their own ideas on how to enliven their prayer life and they deserve as much encouragement and opportunity as possible. They would like to be more active in assembly, for instance, standing while singing, perhaps introducing dance, or exchanging the Sign of Peace at the end – all their own ideas.

How effective are leaders and governors in developing the Catholic Life of the school?

Grade 2

a) How well leaders and governors 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 effectively promote, nurture and sustain the Catholic ethos of the school as their primary concern and care, and it is the main thrust of its strategic planning, as exemplified in the Inset on Vision held in November 2016 and the Governor Conference. The transforming influence of the executive head teacher in particular has resulted in rapid improvement over a short time;
- The governing body is a more challenging, knowledgeable and practical influence in the life of the school, thanks to a new influx of governors, but also a renewed readiness to develop their monitoring role through the take up of diocesan training. They meet all the statutory, canonical, and diocesan requirements fully. Governors attend assemblies where possible but are also active in the parish. Evidence of more challenge and accountability is appearing in the minutes of the governing body meetings;
- Robust and reliable processes of self-evaluation ensure that judgements are becoming more accurate. The school asks parents, staff and pupils, through newsletters, discussions and questionnaires, their views and suggestions for improvement, and as a result it has a realistic view of what has to be done to improve and grow, and has already demonstrated the capacity to follow through its objectives;
- There is at least one Inset day annually devoted specifically to Catholic life and spirituality. Leaders are very open to advice and support from outside agencies, including the diocese, and are reaching out in partnership to the other Catholic schools in the Dunstan cluster.

b) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the curriculum for Religious Education and relationship education, and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

- Leaders and governors are starting to use data and monitoring information more effectively, exercising careful oversight of the curriculum and learning outcomes. They

receive frequent reports from the head of school who is also the RE subject leader, and take part in learning walks, lesson observations, and work scrutinies. They are growing in confidence to challenge and hold staff to account, as is evident in a reading of the minutes of governor's meetings, where there are specific questions, and answers expected, regarding the quality and impact of the RE provision;

- Subject development plans are drawn up based on this monitoring and used as working documents, which are added to or otherwise amended during the course of each term. The need for differentiation by task to better meet individual learning needs, or the encouragement of extended, reflective writing, are good examples of areas highlighted by the much improved closer scrutiny of provision and outcomes;
- The provision for staff induction and in service training is very supportive of the teaching of RE, especially the positive impact of team teaching. Three teachers this year have attended the Clifton Diocese training days, and the governors have had training on monitoring the school improvement plan. This is resulting in teachers becoming, for instance, more confident in assessment and in setting learning objectives, although there is still work to be done in these areas in order to improve pupil outcomes further.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 2

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

- Teaching is good across the school, with some excellent practice especially in questioning which checks understanding and stretches the more able. It is effective in promoting purposeful learning, the engagement of the pupils, their enjoyment, and their overall good results. The pupils' excellent attitudes to learning have a strong impact on their progress and achievement. Learning assistants are involved in planning lessons with the teacher, so that interventions have a positive effect;
- Where learning is weaker, this is due in large part to lessons which are predominantly teacher led, resulting in compliant pupils who have little ownership of their own learning, and who are not sufficiently encouraged to become inquisitive, and independent self learners. The school itself has identified this as an area for improvement;
- Where teaching is better than good, teachers have high expectations of pupils' presentation of work and intellectual effort with pupils rising to the challenge and being able to contribute their own arguments and opinions. Extended writing tasks further encourage a deepening understanding, because pupils are able to argue reflectively, make links between belief and action, and relate what they are learning to their own lives. Learning from religion is a real growing strength of the school;
- There are now more effective systems for the tracking and monitoring of pupil progress over time. The assessment and marking policies are embedded, but the school's own scrutiny of pupils' written work reveals that on occasion, the quality of the teachers' formative comments sometimes lack challenge, or the pupils' response is short and lacks any real intellectual effort, thus defeating the point of marking as a driver for

improvement. The Even Better If format often remains a wish, rather than a challenging spur to think harder and argue with reasons;

- Teachers are becoming more adept at assessing progress with the support of shared moderation with the other schools in the Dunstan partnership. The baseline assessment will provide a more accurate assessment of progress from each individual's starting point.

b) The extent to which the Curriculum promotes pupils' learning

- The RE curriculum meets all Bishops Conference requirements. It is broad and balanced so that students can explore and develop their own values and beliefs. Pupils explore themes such as fairness, compassion and injustice, which they then link to the objects of their charity fundraising, and outreach to others who are more need;
- One very successful outcome from the October 2016 RE coordinators' meeting was the introduction of a weekly Key Value, and several scriptural stories illustrating that particular value. This has reinforced the value itself but also expanded the pupils' biblical knowledge, and encouraged the making of links between the Scriptures and real life experiences;
- The study of other world faiths is a strength of this inclusive school because it promotes tolerance, understanding, and respect for others belief. It also inculcates an appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures.
- Provision for sex and relationship education is in place and approved by the governors adhering to diocesan guidelines;
- The curriculum design of the Come and See programme promotes continuity and progress, and contributes to good teaching and learning. It promotes spiritual, moral and vocational development and is taught through the lens of the Faith;
- The sacramental preparation programme for First Holy Communion is run by the parish but with very small numbers from the school, given the low percentage of Catholic children.

c) The quality of the Prayer life provided by the School

- The prayer life of the school is fully inclusive and joyful. Prayer punctuates the school day and is part of every celebration, including Mass, assemblies, and the marking of Advent and Lent and the major feasts of the Church. There is now a focus on encouraging more pupils to organise and lead collective worship, starting in the first instance with the chaplaincy team;
- The life of the parish is shared with the school. Both the parish priest and deacon are welcome visitors to the school and the children understand who and what their roles are;
- Teachers and pupils have created colourful and thought provoking displays around the school, which remind the whole community of the liturgical cycle, the topics the pupils are currently studying, as well as being supportive of the school's vibrant Catholic life;
- Parents and carers are invited to attend Mass and assemblies, which they increasingly do, and the school is working to reach out more effectively to them and invite them further into the spiritual life of the school.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

All 52 returned questionnaires scrutinised were positive about the school and the quality of their children's education. Some typical responses included:

'As a Roman Catholic family from Poland we wanted our daughter to learn good values and beliefs, but most importantly shape her in relationship with God. All the work of the school is placed in the context of growing in friendship with God.....it's a privilege to have our daughter in this school'.

'We feel that St. Joseph's is a school that not only teaches children about their religion, but that makes it relevant and meaningful to them. The values of tolerance and acceptance are strong'.

'All staff make the children and parents feel very welcome and they are all supportive.....When looking at their RE books during Parents' Evenings, my children loved sharing what they had learnt and have expressed how much they enjoy RE lessons'.

'I am warmed by the Christian values that are taught and demonstrated here. A sense of kindness permeates throughout.....the feel that the children are part of a wider family...the pride the children have in their work and achievements'.

'We are not Catholic but have great respect for the values taught here. Both my children have done well here...we will miss St. Joseph's.....they have been given a good start'.