



INSPECTION REPORT

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
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URN: 109247

Headteacher: Mrs McCarthy
Chair of Governors: Mr R Edwards

**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: 4-5 May 2017
Date of previous inspection: 2-3 July 2012

Reporting Inspector: Mrs A Barrett
Additional Inspector: Mrs C Barron

Description of school

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School is an average sized primary school which serves the Parish of St Joseph's, Fishponds. The percentage of Catholic children is 68%. The school's context has changed significantly over recent years with a changing local community, including a recently established Syro-Malabar community from Southern India. This has resulted in an increase in the proportion of pupils from BME communities, which is currently 57%. The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is in line with the national average but is declining year on year.

The number of children with English as an additional language is rising and has increased from 4% to 39% over 5 years.

The percentage of children with special educational needs (SEN) is below average. The number of children with a Statement of SEN is average.

Since January 2016, the school has been led by a new, experienced headteacher, with a new deputy head (who is also the RE lead) who was appointed in September 2016.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 2

This is a good school because:

- it is a vibrant and joyful Catholic community which is supported and sustained by a strong governing body who are committed to further developing its Catholic life and RE;
- the school's newly established leadership team are, in turn, committed to building on the school's strong Catholic ethos and tradition and this is shared by all staff;
- the school is an inclusive community where all work effectively together to promote a culture of welcome and belonging;
- pupils are exceptionally well behaved and extremely proud of belonging to the Catholic family of St Joseph's;
- supportive relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Pupils appreciate their teachers and feel valued by them;
- the school is highly regarded by parents and has excellent links with the parish and diocese;
- teaching is effective in ensuring that pupils are consistently interested in their learning and make good progress overall.

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

- The school has made good progress in addressing all the issues highlighted in the previous inspection but more could be done to enable all pupils to discuss and plan their own liturgies.
- The governing body works closely with the headteacher to ensure that the Catholicity of the school remains an integral part of all aspects of its work and continues to improve.
- Parents, staff and pupils are highly supportive of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish and embed robust systems and processes to enable leaders and governors to monitor

and evaluate the impact of actions taken to promote Catholic life and religious education.

- Continue to improve teachers' specialist knowledge of RE by providing ongoing training and support both in-house and through attendance at diocesan courses.
- Improve the quality of 'next steps' marking in order to enable pupils to correct errors made and to deepen their understanding of the subject.
- Extend opportunities for pupils in other year groups to discuss and plan their own liturgies and to participate in chaplaincy activities as members of the chaplaincy team.

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

Grade 1

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

- Pupils are hugely proud of their school and take full advantage of the many opportunities it provides to enable them to develop in their faith.
- They are confident, happy individuals who demonstrate high levels of respect for each other and adults. They have a clear grasp of the school's mission and how it affects their daily lives.
- Pupils enjoy learning about their own faith and other faiths. Children from all faiths and none work together in harmony and are involved in many aspects of chaplaincy and school worship.
- The rich Catholic ethos which underpins and permeates every aspect of school life is evidenced daily in the relationships between staff, pupils, parents and governors. There is a strong sense of everyone growing in faith together.
- Pupils participate wholeheartedly in all school activities and are immensely welcoming to all visitors. Children in Year 5 and 6 embrace opportunities to take responsibility and leadership in the school's Catholic life through involvement in chaplaincy, leading Friday liturgy, preparing and organising 'focus displays' for assemblies, creating and maintaining classroom prayer areas and composing bidding prayers.
- Pupils benefit significantly through involvement in whole-school child-centred events such as the Passover meal and Palm service which enables them to deepen their understanding of key celebrations in the liturgical year.
- Supportive relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Pupils appreciate their teachers and feel valued by them.
- Pupils respond enthusiastically to the many opportunities to live out the school mission statement, for example, through raising money for local and national charities. In addition, each class has a yearly charity focus which is linked into the wider curriculum. For example, Year 5's topic work on 'There's no place like home' has led to links with Shelter.
- Links with St Joseph's parish are strong and highly valued by pupils, resulting in a strong partnership between home, school and parish, working together as partners in the spiritual formation and education of children. Pupils value the regular visits of the parish priest who is a prominent and active member of the school community.
- Pupils are well behaved, polite and respectful Supportive relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Pupils appreciate their teachers and feel valued by them.
- Chaplaincy is well established in Y6, with Year 5 shadowing in the summer term so that they are ready to take up the reins in the autumn. This large multi-faith team of pupils from different faith traditions has been effective in leading RE and prayer activities in the outside prayer room. They have been actively involved in supporting other children to set up prayer areas in their classrooms, manning the prayer room at lunchtimes, volunteering as Prayer Patrol at playtimes. A sub-group of worship leaders plans and leads the Friday whole school liturgy. One member of the team shared: 'It is important that all religions in our school are represented on the chaplaincy team.'

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

- The school has robust systems in place to ensure that good or better progress is made by all in relation to their starting points.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning are a testament to the ethos of the school. Positive teacher-pupil rapport and classroom management are strong characteristics of every class and are supported throughout by a positive climate for learning.
- Pupils enjoy RE, are well motivated in lessons and keen to participate in discussion but this could be further strengthened by providing more opportunities for them to contribute in lessons. The school's recent focus on AT2 has been instrumental in enhancing pupils' enjoyment of the subject and has paid dividends in relation to the quality both of written work and oral contributions.
- Pupils are confident learners in RE and take pride in their work. They are becoming more involved with self-evaluation, which is an area that the school is working on. Pupils are able to use religious vocabulary in a meaningful way with, for example, Year 6 speaking knowledgeably about the Easter Triduum as a culmination of the liturgical year.
- Pupils respond positively to the well-planned opportunities for them to reflect on their faith in relation to their own lives. This, and the close links with the parish, has created a culture of pupils naturally sharing key events that are important to their family and celebrated in their life, such as the Sacraments of Baptism, Holy Communion, and Marriage.
- Discussions with pupils affirm that RE not only helps support their faith but also is highly effective in developing their understanding of the faith story of others. They speak enthusiastically about their learning about Sikhism, Islam and Judaism and their visits to the local mosque and gurdwara.
- They are able to think spiritually, ethically and theologically, and particularly to draw relevance to their own lives, and their personal response to what they believe.

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

- Opportunities to respond to and participate in the school's prayer life are well developed and form an integral part of the life of the school. All pray at key times throughout the day and prayer is always child-led with support from teachers, as appropriate.
- Prayer and liturgy are at the centre of everything the school does and is a driving force in promoting and developing the mission of the school. It is a clear strength of which governors, staff and children are rightly proud.
- Pupils relish the regular opportunities to prepare, plan and participate in class and whole school Masses and liturgies. Worship leaders lead prayer during school assemblies and prepare and organize the 'focus display' for assemblies, reflections and collective worship. This develops pupils' confidence and independence in leading worship and prayer.
- Pupils, irrespective of faith background, value these opportunities and readily participate in the routine prayer life of the school, demonstrating respect and reverence during individual and collective prayer.
- There is clear evidence of children developing a growing understanding of liturgy as they progress through the school, with whole school events such as the Passover meal and Palm service led by the chaplaincy team making a significant contribution to this.
- The chaplaincy team, who are well-respected members of the school community, are very effective in leading other children in exploring their faith more deeply and taking responsibility for whole school events. This was especially evident during a whole school assembly on friendship where the

team presented their own puppet play to convey their message, linking with the story of Martha and Mary, and leading prayers.

- Pupils sing joyfully during Mass and liturgies, reflect in silence and join in community prayers with confidence. The school choir makes an important contribution to the contribution of a prayerful atmosphere and encouraging all to sing with gusto.
- Pupils enjoy creating and maintaining the classroom prayer areas and respond positively to the school tradition of the chaplaincy team distributing prayer bags for Advent and Easter which are shared with family and friends.
- Pupils are at ease when praying with others of different beliefs, with all children, irrespective of their faith background, included in prayer and worship. All have opportunities to lead class and whole school worship and plan Masses. A school prayer book for children invites all children to contribute their personal prayers whilst class prayer books and interactive displays are effectively used to encourage individuals to contribute to and lead prayer in class.
- Opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of the sacramental life of the church are rich, with the parish priest working closely with the school to ensure that school Masses are accessible to all and pupils are helped to understand and appreciate the importance of symbols, scripture and traditional prayers. The parish works closely with the school to enable children to prepare fully for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist over a two-year period.

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 are deeply committed to promoting, nurturing and sustaining the Catholic ethos of the school. The governing body has a challenging, knowledgeable and practical influence upon the life of the school and has recently established a new committee structure which is more fit for purpose.
- The new, experienced headteacher has carefully appraised the school's strengths and areas for improvement, building on the strong Catholic foundation she has inherited by bringing a freshness of vision and systematic approach to this area. The recent changes to the leadership team and structure of governance will ensure that the school will continue to move forward in both its Catholic life and RE. This bodes well for the future.
- The Catholic mission of the school is prioritised by all leaders and governors, who ensure that all statutory and canonical responsibilities are met. They meet regularly to discuss improvements in relation to the faith life of the school and are kept informed, through the headteacher's reports, about ongoing developments in relation to the school's Catholic life.
- The school has developed strong diocesan links through the Aquinas cluster. Governors have an excellent record of engagement with the Diocese, with governor representatives on the diocesan Mission and Ethos committee, and very high rates of attendance at training. Leaders are also fully engaged in diocesan training and demonstrate high levels of commitment to leadership training and retreats.
- Governors and leaders are involved in contributing to the RE and Catholic life SEF (Self Evaluation Plan) with an extended staff and governors meeting used to engage all stakeholders in contributing

to this process. Governors have a high profile in the life of the school, attending school and class celebration of Mass, liturgical celebrations, collective worship, school retreats, staff meetings and INSET. The RE link governor has also engaged in book audits with the previous deputy headteacher.

- Governors, however, acknowledge that their involvement in shaping a RE/Catholic life development plan with clear systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact on pupils and staff has been limited to date, but is an area which the new committee is keen to address. The embryonic RE/Catholic Life action plan needs to be strengthened further by including clear goals, specific actions, roles and responsibilities, deadlines and resource allocation.
- Developing the spiritual life of the staff is an important priority for governors and leaders. This is evident in the extensive CPD opportunities for both staff and governors. Four teachers have undertaken extensive training in RE, which is having a positive impact on pupil outcomes.
- Staff prayers and INSET days on spirituality and RE are an integral part of school life and help to develop ownership of the school's mission and values. There is at least one INSET day annually devoted specifically to Catholic life and spirituality and an annual residential staff retreat, with the most recent one taking place in Glastonbury Abbey. This focused on The Year of Mercy and included passing through the Holy Door of Mercy at St Mary's. New staff interviewed consider that they are being well prepared for teaching in a Catholic school and have valued the RE induction and planning meetings and opportunities to attend diocesan training.
- Governors have determined that RE should be given additional priority in 2016/17 to ensure the school's mission remains of prime importance at a time of key changes in leadership. High levels of spending have been ring-fenced for RE, including a significant budget allocation for RE training.

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

- Governors have oversight of religious education and SRE (Sex and Relationship Education) and fulfil all their statutory and canonical responsibilities well.
- The newly appointed deputy headteacher, who is also the school's RE lead, is new to both roles and has been undeterred in her determination to work with teachers to ensure that the historically good pupil outcomes in RE are maintained across the board. She has tackled this, and her role as chaplaincy coordinator, with gusto, attending all relevant diocesan training and disseminating this to staff and governors, as appropriate.
- The school has systems in place for tracking pupil progress in RE which include lesson observations, book scrutinies and monitoring of feedback to teachers.
- The Aquinas RE subject leader network has been highly effective in developing assessment practices which have impacted positively on learning within the school, whilst developing strong links with the Catholic secondary school and sixth form college. Leaders consider that cross-school moderation of standards in RE across the cluster has been effective in supporting confident and accurate work scrutiny and assessment.

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 effective in ensuring that pupils are consistently interested in their learning and make good progress overall. Pupils enjoy and focus well on their learning because teachers

create a positive learning environment, reinforcing expectations for conduct and setting clear tasks which engage and motivate them.

- This positive learning environment enables pupils to learn from mistakes and motivates them to find out more. This, combined with a strong focus on celebrating achievement and effort, is highly effective in encouraging pupils' enjoyment of RE.
- The best lessons were characterised by skilful questioning to probe pupils' responses and enable them to reshape tasks and explanations so that pupils better understand and build on new concepts.
- At times, there was a mismatch between the lesson learning objective and actual activity which resulted in pupils not being effectively challenged and achieving what they were capable of, e.g. retelling a biblical story rather than explaining. Again, this should be addressed through subject training.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and skilled practitioners who are keen to improve their knowledge of RE. They value the support provided by the RE lead and the opportunities to attend RE in-house and diocesan training.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge which inspires and challenges pupils and contributes to their good progress. At times, however, factual inaccuracies are not corrected in some written and oral work. This appears to be linked to teachers' depth of understanding in RE (in relation to the more difficult aspects of the subject) and should be addressed through ongoing subject training and accessing supplementary RE resources on the diocesan website.
- Regular assessment, including pupil self-assessment, ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. This, combined with effective systems to track pupils' progress in RE, enables underachievement to be tackled at an early stage.
- The school's new feedback and marking policy is consistently implemented in RE but care should be taken to ensure that comments are, where appropriate, more specific and personalised to enable the child to progress further, and that children respond to written feedback.

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

- The RE curriculum is rich, broad and balanced with pupils' spiritual and moral development at its centre. It meets all Bishops Conference requirements and provides continuity and progression within and between the key stages. This ensures that pupils are able to make appropriate progress in relation to their starting points.
- The curriculum is very effective in helping to develop pupils' understanding of the Catholic faith. It is enriched through imaginative and well planned strategies to capitalize on the expertise within and beyond the school, which leads to learning which is often stimulating and memorable. It could be further strengthened by using the supplementary materials on the diocesan website to enhance the God Matters programme and ensure challenge at the appropriate level.
- There are opportunities to explore themes such as injustice, compassion and fairness. These dovetail with work in PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) and extra-curricular activities which, in turn, link to charity fundraising and outreach to others in society who are in need.
- The study of world faiths is an important aspect of this inclusive school, playing a key part in promoting tolerance, respect for others and understanding of religious and cultural differences.
- The school has strong links with the local mosque. This includes regular visits there as well as visits to the school by the imam and other key members of the Bristol Muslim community. The school is currently building links with the Bristol Progressive Synagogue.

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- Provision for relationship and sex education is in place and is consistent with the teaching of the Church and diocesan guidelines. It has recently been reviewed within the Aquinas cluster and should be further reviewed in line with the recently published diocesan guidelines.
 - Enrichment activities such as the Year 4/5 residential trip to Kintbury and other residential visits have a positive impact on children's self-esteem, develop teamwork and provide opportunities for their moral, spiritual and vocational development.

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

- Prayer is central to the life of the school and is inclusive and joyful. It follows a structure of regular class based acts of worship, whole school and class assemblies, with class opportunities to pray daily at the start and end of the day and to say grace at lunchtime.
- The Year 6 chaplaincy team and worship leaders play an important part in organising and leading worship. The time is ripe to extend this to other year groups across the school. Worship leaders have a range of resources available to support them in creating prayer areas and a worship focus for assemblies and masses.
- Each classroom contains a prayer area for pupils to access when they feel the need to reflect, write a personal prayer, or spend some quiet time alone. The children maintain these areas with the chaplaincy team providing support, as appropriate. Children know that the colours that they choose to decorate the prayer areas link with the current season of the Church.
- The younger children also have imaginative/small world play resources in their prayer corners to allow them to re-enact their learning, while adults use observations made in this area as a further assessment tool.
- Key seasons and feasts of the Church's year are celebrated through Mass and assemblies both in school and in the parish church, which is adjacent.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of the Church's year. Vibrant displays around the school and reflection areas in classrooms and the entrance foyer remind the school community of the liturgical year and reinforce classroom learning. These displays change regularly in accordance with the liturgical year and 'God Matters' themes.
- The school has excellent links with the parish. The parish priest makes an important and valued contribution to the spiritual life of the school, supporting its role in the wider mission of the parish and the universal Church. Parishioners, parents and carers regularly attend school Mass, assemblies, reflections and other celebrations.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 38 parental questionnaires received and these were overwhelmingly positive about the school. A small number of parents sought a clearer understanding of what is taught in relationship and sex education.

Some typical responses included:

‘It is warm, inclusive and has a positive atmosphere, with a wide range of cultural, racial and religious backgrounds’.

‘High standards of education with emphasis on religion and respect for other beliefs. Warm and welcoming atmosphere with well-behaved and confident children’.

‘The school is distinctive because of the religious education it provides. I want my child to grow in faith and follow the right path’.

‘It looks after the educational, social and spiritual values I want my child to grow up with’.

‘All-inclusive with good principles..... Catholic ethos.... Good reputation’.

‘It is Catholic school which instils good values and ethics.’

‘An education underpinned by the Christian faith’.

‘The school embraces high moral standards and the spiritual development of children’.

‘It is a local school which my family have attended for many decades. The teaching staff are incredible and we are more than happy to have our three children attend St Joseph’s over the years’.

‘There is a lovely atmosphere at St Joseph’s and as a parent, I always feel informed about my children’s time and progress at the school’.

‘St Joseph’s is a family friendly school which is always welcoming and approachable. I have never seen a frown on a teacher’s face. They really care for students’ well-being’.