

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



Inspection Report of Denominational Character and Religious Education

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Priory Road, Chalfont St Peter, SL9 8SB

DCSF School No: 825 3371

URN: 148671

Headteacher: Mrs C Lovegrove
Chair of Governors: Mr B Moloney

Reporting Inspector: Mrs K Yuen
Associate Inspector: Mrs P Cotton

Date of Inspection: 19 November 2021

Date report issued: 9 December 2021

Date of previous inspection: 22 April 2015

The school is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and in partnership with
Buckinghamshire Local Authority

Information about the school

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is a two-form primary school located in Chalfont St Peter, Gerrards Cross. The number on roll is 362 of whom 57% are Catholic. The school serves two parishes: St Joseph's, Chalfont St Peter and St Teresa's, Beaconsfield. The school has a high number of Catholic members of staff, three of whom have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. The vast majority of pupils are white British although the number of children joining with English as an additional language is increasing.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic School

Grade 2

St Joseph's continues to be a good Catholic primary school. Leadership is effective. All staff are committed to the faith life of the school and are united in their quest to provide the best opportunities for pupils' academic, spiritual and moral development. Therefore, outcomes for pupils are good. They are successful learners, behave very well and are keen to achieve. They have good knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and are rapidly acquiring skills to plan and prepare liturgies. The headteacher and senior leaders have maintained a good Catholic ethos. Pupils are proud of their Catholic school, saying it is inspiring. They are eager to contribute to the Catholic ethos and prayer life. Relationships are characterised by mutual respect and pupil behaviour is excellent. The governors are totally committed to the continuing development of the school and the welfare and education of all its pupils.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 2

Regarding the improvement recommendations from the last inspection, those relating to assessment, the mission statement, chaplaincy and the monitoring of RE and Catholic life are fully met. However, the consistency in the quality and quantity of RE written pieces across the school is still a work in progress.

The school's self evaluation is detailed and reflective. It informs the school's development planning. However, the inspectors did not concur with all the judgements made by the school; with more rigour this will improve considerably. The staff and governors are committed to continued improvement. The RE leaders and the leadership team have a good overall view of the school's strengths and development needs.

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors share a strong vision for the further development of the Catholic nature of the school and for the continued improvement in attainment in RE. Leaders in the school are dedicated to doing the best for the pupils in their care. A real strength is Catholic life and the collaborative work with many charities and the parish. The leadership has capacity to develop this even further.

There is a strong leadership team who are passionate for the betterment of the school. Despite the disruption to education nationally, the school has worked hard to maintain the standard of RE and Catholic life. Leaders have a strong commitment to improvement and the humility to learn from others, thus the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- To improve the consistency in presentation and quality of RE learning in books.
- To plan and deliver highly effective lessons to enable the more able to be challenged and use deeper questioning to probe thinking further.
- To build on the good teaching and learning through sharing practice within and outside of the school.

Catholic Life

Grade 1

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The school's mission statement and values underpin the behaviour of all members of the community. This has been developed further to inform the basis of the termly *Love, Learn, Grow* awards for those showing the attributes of the mission statement. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their experiences of belonging to the Catholic community of St Joseph's. They understood the mission statement and were able to talk about how it was 'alive' in their school. There was a clear understanding of the expectations of the school and a great willingness to take responsibility for caring for each other. These have recently included Children in Need, Mary's Meals and the London Slough Run providing food parcels. Pupils are given many opportunities to take on responsibilities to develop the Catholic character of the school through the work of the Mini Vinnies and faith ambassadors. Pupils are proud of their school and community. They show their concern for those less fortunate than themselves by supporting various charities and fundraising activities throughout the year.

Provision for the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. A wide range of assemblies and collective worship are part of the school's provision, where key celebrations in the Church's liturgical year enable pupils to develop in their faith journey. The school's Catholic identity is evident in the many displays relating to its Catholic life. The mission statement is displayed around the school. The environment has religious artefacts, signs and symbols; displays and the prayer tables all look well cared for and are a focal feature in each class. Good links with local parishes, other Catholic schools and the Diocese of Northampton strengthen the school's partnership with the wider Catholic community. The school benefits from its close proximity to the parish church and the excellent support given to the school by the parish priest. He is a regular visitor to the school and provides a valued chaplaincy role to the whole school community. A parental survey distributed prior to the inspection showed a very high rate of return and showed parents were overwhelmingly positive about the Catholic life of the school.

The promotion, monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life of the school are good. Leaders and governors are most effective in promoting the Catholic life of the school. This is demonstrated by the way self-evaluation is explicitly focused on Catholic life and the aim to enhance current provision. Leaders monitor and evaluate provision and outcomes to plan future improvements. The religious education co-ordinator is committed to and enthusiastic in leading religious education. She leads her subject with dedication. She attends regular training and updates provided by the Diocese of Northampton. Governors have a clear understanding of their role in promoting and monitoring the Catholic life of the school and their responsibility to the diocesan bishop. They regularly attend collective worship and whole school services and discuss religious education at governors meetings. The local parish priest demonstrates a high level of commitment to the school by visits, involving pupils in celebrations of Mass and acting as an additional teaching resource. This was observed in Year 6 lessons, where he responded to the pupils' questions on vocation.

Religious Education

Grade 2

Religious education at St Joseph's is good and improving. Pupils achieve well and enjoy their lessons. They make good progress; behaviour for learning is excellent. In lessons, pupils are engaged and keen to contribute to discussions. They understand what it means to be a Christian as well as having a knowledge of other faiths. Pupils are proud of their work and speak confidently about what they have learnt. Pupils applied prior knowledge and understanding well in the classroom and many demonstrated good biblical knowledge. They work independently and collaboratively within a range of different activities according to age and ability. Pupils generally are making good progress in religious education within lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are well supported and are making good progress.

The quality of teaching and learning and assessment in religious education is good. All teaching observed was good. Varied support through a focus table enabled all pupils to access the lesson. This could be developed further to ensure the content of the religious education curriculum is covered in greater depth, especially at the higher levels. There are strong cross-curricular links, particularly between English and religious education. Pupils are engaged and enthusiastic as teachers use open-ended questioning, discussions with talk partners and an interesting selection of tasks and resources to deepen pupils' learning. Work in pupils' books is of varied quality. Knowledgeable teaching assistants provide invaluable support within some of the classes. This was a strength and could be modelled to ensure it is a consistent feature across all year groups.

School leaders and governors are strongly committed to religious education. They ensure the curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference with at least 10% of curriculum time devoted to the subject. The religious education curriculum is delivered through the *Come and See* programme and is enhanced by the *Journey in Love* scheme and Coram Education for PHSE. The system for monitoring is leading to good outcomes for all pupils. The subject leader tracks the progress of each year group and a system to track individuals and groups is well developed. Governors are aware of developments in religious education. They also observe religious education through learning walks and drop-ins. Governors are well informed of standards through committee and governor reports.

Collective Worship

Grade 2

Collective worship at St Joseph's is good. St Joseph's is a prayerful community where collective worship has a central place in the life of the school. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoyed leading and taking part in various forms of collective worship, as they like to have the opportunity to share in prayer together. During worship, pupils listen, join in and respond in a sincere and respectful way. Both staff and pupil leaders lead prayer and plan liturgies. Pupils respond well to the spiritual and moral development within collective worship. They have capacity to listen, give thanks and be forgiven. They value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and its links to the parish community. Pupils have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, her feasts and seasons. They enjoy talking of how these are celebrated in school and their contribution to these occasions.

The quality of provision for collective worship is good. As a consequence of the previous Covid restrictions, the school has placed an emphasis on class worship and developing pupil leadership of this. The benefits of this have been retained and are evolving practice. During the inspection, pupils led collective worship in classes. Pupils regularly are involved in preparing collective worship in their classrooms and are given opportunities for personal reflection. Each classroom has a prayer focus with religious artefacts which often includes children's work. The RE leader provides the class teachers with the resources for the month's focus; for example, "In November we remember" was displayed in every classroom. Masses are celebrated in school and parish throughout the year and the traditions of the Church are explored with pupils. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to many celebrations and pupils visit the church. The school offers a wide range of prayer and worship opportunities, including a retreat in the older year groups. A striking remembrance hall display is evidence of how the school came together as a community in remembrance.

Leaders promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship. There are many opportunities for pupils to lead worship both in class and in whole school events. However, support and training for pupils in their delivery is needed to ensure the effectiveness and quality of liturgy. During the inspection, only pupil-led prayers were seen; however evidence files show that school leaders are active participants in the school's collective worship and prayer life, acting as role models and recognising that it is essential to the spiritual life of the school. School newsletters and the website keep parents informed. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship form part of school self-evaluation and planning for continued improvement. To strengthen the quality for this important area leaders, need to consider the balance of and support given to pupil-led liturgy.

The inspectors would like to express their thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.