

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: 110477

Headteacher: Mrs J Marsh
Chair of Governors: Mr J Wroe

Reporting Inspector: Mrs R Jones
Associate Inspector: Mrs K Williams

Date of Inspection: 22 April 2015
Date report issued: 15 May 2015
Date of previous inspection: 9 December 2009

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

Information about the School

St Joseph's is a larger than average size Catholic primary school. The number of pupils on roll is 413 of whom 72% are Catholic. 77% of teaching staff are Catholic. The school serves two parishes; St Joseph's, Chalfont St Peter, and St Theresa's, Beaconsfield. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The number of pupils who have special educational needs is below national average. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage. During this academic year there have been many changes to staff of whom more than two thirds are new to the school.

Key for Inspection Grades

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

Overall Effectiveness of this Catholic School

Grade 2

St Joseph's is a good Catholic school. The committed leadership of the headteacher and governors is instrumental in ensuring the school has a strong Catholic identity and character. This ethos is embraced by the whole school community. Prayer is a central part of the school's daily life promoting the spiritual and moral development of the children. Pupils behave well, they feel safe and cared for. Overall, teaching is good but ranges from 'requires improvement' to 'good' with one observed lesson having outstanding features. Through the school council pupils are given a voice and their opinions are valued. Regular pupil questionnaires enable all pupils' views to be sought.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 2

Since the last inspection there have been many staffing changes. Issues raised in the previous Section48 report have largely been addressed and those which are not feature in the current school improvement plan. The head teacher and the deputy head teacher have a clear vision for the Catholic life of the school. They recognise the need to develop further the school's religious ethos and standards in religious education. The SLT are actively supported in this by the governors. It is clear that leaders are intending to enable St Joseph's to become a vibrant Catholic community. The capacity of the current leadership to sustain further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- further refine pupil assessment procedures to include tracking pupil attainment in RE
- ensure consistency in the quality and quantity of pupils' RE written work across the school
- swiftly complete work on a new mission statement so that it is known and understood by all members of the community
- formalise chaplaincy provision across the school ensuring planned development and sound evaluation
- develop a robust system for monitoring all aspects of the RE curriculum and the Catholic life of the school.

Outcomes for Pupils

Grade 2

Pupils speak highly of their school and of their teachers, benefitting from the schools' Catholic ethos. They are keen to participate in all aspects of school life. Pupils are friendly, caring and ready and willing to help. They demonstrate an awareness of the needs of others and are involved in raising funds for a variety of charities both local and national including the 'Slough and London Run' a charity that provides food for the homeless in London and Slough. Pupils feel well supported, safe and valued at school. They speak confidently about the work and purpose of the school council.

Children at St Joseph's respond well to worship and prayer, demonstrating respect and reverence. There is a wide variety of worship ranging from quiet prayer, reflection at retreats to prayer groups and whole school collective worship. The pupils are involved in helping to plan celebration liturgies. Local clergy and the parish youth worker are very supportive and visit the school regularly. Prayer areas can be found in each classroom.

The wide variety of collective worship experienced at St Joseph's makes a good contribution to the moral and spiritual development of the pupils and offers support to staff.

The chaplaincy team plays a significant part in developing the mission of the school. However, there is no chaplaincy policy and the provision needs to be formalised through the creation of a development plan and a process of regular monitoring and evaluation.

Pupils know RE is an important subject and that RE books are special. They demonstrate a sound knowledge of the Catholic faith. Pupils generally achieve age appropriate RE levels of attainment and progress in line with diocesan expectations. Pupils enjoy religious education lessons through which they demonstrated co-operative learning, working well together to complete practical tasks. On occasions teachers miss opportunities to challenge the more able and extend their learning.

Leaders and managers

Grade 2

The head teacher is committed to the mission of the school. She has accurately identified the schools strengths and weaknesses. She is supported in this by the deputy head teacher who is also the RE coordinator. The deputy head teacher is relatively new in post. However, she has begun to establish a system of monitoring to ensure that RE lessons are well planned and good standards are set. Learning walks and book scrutinies have been undertaken with feedback given to staff. Formal assessment systems are in place. However, pupil attainment is not currently tracked and analysed in order to raise standards.

The governors are very supportive of the school. There is a designated governor for RE. Governors have recently formed a 'Catholic life of the school' committee consisting of governors and staff. This committee have undertaken learning walks, meet regularly with the headteacher and are focussed on raising the profile of the Catholicity of the school. The budget for RE is in line with that given to other core subjects.

Provision

Grade 2

Worship and prayer are integral to life at St Joseph's. The pupils learn a variety of traditional prayers. Prayer areas in the classrooms are used as a focus for prayer. Plans to redevelop the current school prayer garden will further develop opportunities for prayer and liturgy. Collective worship is well planned with a range of formal and informal opportunities for prayer. Recently retreats for pupils in KS2 have been arranged at the local church. Parents are also invited to the retreat days. Pupils benefit greatly from this opportunity for reflection and spiritual development.

Teaching overall is good. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and contribute well to class discussions. A more creative use of ICT, artefacts and other appropriate resources would further enhance the children's learning. Pupils are well supported by TAs. Marking is at present inconsistent. However, where it is good marking indicates next steps in learning with opportunities for pupils to respond to the feedback given. The quality and quantity of work in pupils' books is inconsistent. Pupils' books do not always reflect the same enthusiasm and enjoyment demonstrated verbally as written tasks do not always sufficiently engage and challenge the children.

Pupil's work is assessed in line with diocesan guidance. 10% of teaching time is devoted to the teaching of RE. The 'Come and See' programme is fully implemented across the school. Strong links with local priests and the parish youth worker help to strengthen the links between home, school and parish.

The inspectors would like to thank members of the school community of St Joseph's for making them so welcome.