



INSPECTION REPORT

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School

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DfES Number: 801/3405

URN: 109247

Headteacher: Matthew Condon

Chair of Governors: Shelagh Williams

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: July 2-3rd 2012

Date of previous inspection: December 2008

Reporting Inspector: Joseph Skivington

Description of School

St. Josephs is an oversubscribed, average size primary school with 236 pupils on roll, 69% of whom are Catholic. The majority of children are drawn from the parish of St. Joseph's, as well as from further afield. Just under half of children are from White British backgrounds, with the remainder from other backgrounds, including significant minorities of Polish and Indian/Keralan origin. The figure for FSM children is just below the national average, but the percentage of EAL pupils is over twice the national mean. The number of pupils with special educational needs is lower than the national average, but because the school only recognises children with specific and significant need as SEN. Attainment on entry is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St. Joseph's provides an outstanding Catholic education for all its pupils. It is a fully inclusive, distinctively Catholic community where all are welcome and accepted as individuals made in the image of God, and its ethos is characterised by openness to all, with strong and close links over many years to the parents, the parish, and the wider community. Pupils participate enthusiastically in and respond impressively to the excellent faith enriching provision for prayer life and liturgy. The adjoining parish church provides many opportunities to be involved in parish life, and this demonstrates the sense of the mission of the school being part of the wider mission of the Church. Outcomes from the religious education programme are good, the result of solidly good teaching. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as the others, because of very effective interventions, proactive support in lessons, and tasks clearly suited to their learning needs. The religious education programme makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

Grade 1

The school's capacity to sustain the quality of care and education it provides is excellent. The outstanding leadership has built on the previous good performance noted at the last inspection and raised it to a higher level. Self evaluation at all levels is grounded in accurate analysis and rigorous review. The senior leadership team inspires the whole school community towards an ambitious vision, planning effectively to ensure that the processes for managing the performance of staff and for their professional development are used well, for example, making particularly fruitful use of diocesan resources and training exercises. The areas for improvement from the last inspection were to develop the new methods of assessment as well as improving marking in each class to ensure consistency. Also to embed changes in the governing body and its monitoring role. These have all been addressed successfully and in the case of assessment, is beginning to transform the approach of teachers to improving standards. The programme for Personal Relationship Education is now well embedded.

What the school should do to improve further

- To improve the length and quality of written work by giving pupils more opportunities to respond more reflectively and evaluatively to what they are learning.
- To develop a forum where all pupils can discuss and plan even further their own liturgies and their contribution to the Catholic life of the school.

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

Grade 1

Pupils are wholeheartedly involved in the Catholic life of the school and make a positive contribution to it, not least by their excellent behaviour, which contributes to their own learning and the ethos of the school. Their grasp and understanding of the school's mission is very impressive because they can both talk about it with remarkable fluency, and can relate it to their daily lives in and outside of school. For example, the older children produced a video talking about St. Joseph's mission, and what it meant to them, which was played in the cathedral and which was a real evangelising offering in their own words. They feel their voice is heard through opportunities for feedback, such as the very valuable Focussed Learning Conversations, where they discuss their learning in a particular lesson with the head teacher. They take responsibility for their own lives and the care of the younger children. They absorb easily the shared values lived out in the Catholic ethos of the school and have a sound awareness of spiritual and moral matters which they are able to articulate well. They demonstrate a remarkable conviction in their Faith and speak easily of their spirituality through their own prayers but would benefit even more from time, space, and quietness to write reflectively and at length by committing their thoughts to paper. They respond generously to the needs of others beyond the school, and this makes a valuable contribution to the welcoming openness and inclusivity of the school. Many are involved in fundraising for a variety of charities both home and overseas, as well as outreach to the local community and local charities.

Their response to and participation in the prayer life of the school is outstanding. They use well the opportunity to learn the skills of planning and preparing assemblies and Masses in school, becoming more involved as they go through the school and moving beyond just being participants or onlookers. This was particularly impressive in a Year 6 pupil initiated and directed prayer presentation on Moving On, with a powerful mix of their own prayers and reflections imaginatively presented to their peers. All pupils play an active part in liturgies, sing joyously, and compose very beautiful and heartfelt prayers, examples of which are collected, kept in the reflective corner of the classroom, and are said daily. Their demeanour and reverence at prayer, even the youngest ones in the Reception class, demonstrate a seriousness and growing faith, as well as a sense of the sacred and the special time for prayer.

Achievement and progress in religious education is good throughout the school. Prior attainment on entry is broadly average, but by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils attain above, and some well above, what is expected. Learning outcomes for all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with EAL are good. They can discuss the topics they cover easily and translate the truths they learn into their own lives. They have a sound grasp of the main tenets of the Faith, for instance, the significance of the Last Supper, or the divinity of Jesus, as well as understanding the message of Jesus through His miracles and parables. In lessons pupils work hard and enjoy the subject, especially when they are challenged and engaged by effective teaching strategies and precisely targetted lesson and learning objectives, although this is not always consistently the case. In the best lessons pupils can take ownership

of their own learning with well planned but minimal intervention by the teacher. In these the more able are stretched and approach their full potential. Passive learning on the other hand leads to disengagement and is a barrier to better than progress.

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

Grade 1

Outstanding leadership and management promote the Catholic life of the school very effectively, with appraisal, and focussed planning for future improvement. The Catholic ethos of the school colours all of its activities and in its thinking and planning the leadership has absorbed and has aligned its vision very closely with the diocesan document Called to be a People of Hope. Care is taken to keep alive and in the forefront of the staff, the mission of the school, especially at the start of the academic year. The last re-energising exercise, which involved pupils and parents in interpreting the mission, has been very fruitful and valuable in promoting and nurturing further the Catholic ethos of the school and given the pupils a powerful but easily remembered statement. The school has ensured regular diocesan training for all staff on spirituality and Catholic education. Teachers have also benefited from the Theology for Catholic Teachers, as well as diocesan training for assessment. Prayer life and liturgies are monitored and reviewed very effectively, with close liaison between governors and senior leadership. The whole staff and governors' retreat about Catholic mission had a powerful refocusing impact and could very fruitfully be repeated. The head teacher reports to the governing body on the quality of Catholic life at every governors' meeting. The school development plan objectives are linked closely to performance management. The effectiveness of leadership and management is seen in the high morale of the staff, the pupil's good care for one another, and the very good relationships between staff and pupils.

The governing body is made up of supportive members who are committed to sustaining the school's ethos and standards, and who visit the school and some lessons whenever they can. The RE coordinator liaises well with the link governor and reports formally to the governing body. The link governor for Religious education is a frequent and welcome visitor. The governing body is making itself more closely aware of the work that the school is doing so that it can provide real challenge and critical support, demonstrated by their alacrity in taking advantage of diocesan training and advice. All statutory and canonical responsibilities are met.

There is a clear policy promoted by governors and senior staff to promote community cohesion with the result that the school has an openness to all, all are included in its life, and its generous outreach to the local and the global community is a real strength. The school collaborates well with other schools and participates in community undertakings, including local charities. The curriculum provides an exploration of other faiths, and good use is made of resources. Those of other denominations or faiths feel that they are able to express their own beliefs comfortably, and all feel included and welcomed into every aspect of school life. Acts of worship leave room for the other person's spiritual identity, their modes of expression and their values. Parents and children from all backgrounds, especially those from other cultures are not just welcomed and supported, but inject a real sense of global awareness and provide rich experiences within the school's diverse community.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 2

Provision for prayer life is outstanding, a real strength of the school, because it meets very effectively the spiritual needs of the pupils, be it through assemblies and liturgies, or the opportunities for reflection, often in the new prayer space. Year 6 devised and presented their own reflection time, using power point and readings, which was an excellent opportunity to reflect together as a group. The school supports the parish- run preparation programme for First Holy Communion, especially through the sacramental units of the curriculum. There are many occasions during the day for spiritual nourishment through prayer and moments of reflection. The liturgical year is well marked, planned, and celebrated, particularly Advent, Lent and Holy Week. Then each event is evaluated and reviewed to determine how it could be bettered and made more relevant and engaging. A retreat for the Year 6 pupils has been planned for autumn 2012 at St. Joseph's Home in Clifton.

The curriculum successfully meets the needs of all groups of pupils, as well as meeting the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education requirements, such as the allocation of time. The school follows the God Matters curriculum and was one of the first to adopt it. Relationship education is dealt with sensitively and clearly from a Catholic standpoint. The beliefs of other faiths are explored through topics in the schemes of work. Resources are well managed, and ICT, art and music particularly are used imaginatively to colour and enrich the learning experience. The colourful artwork and displays around the school reinforce the RE topics or liturgical seasons the pupils are studying, they affirm the creators and educate others, and visibly declare the Catholic ethos of the school. Resources to support teaching, and to enliven and enrich the schemes of work, are good. The curriculum makes an excellent and invaluable contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils, and is an area that the school is working on to improve even further.

The quality of teaching and purposeful learning is good, with satisfactory, good and outstanding practice observed. Outstanding teaching enables the pupils to learn really well because it engages their interest and provides challenge, so that the pupils themselves do the work and make the intellectual effort. In these lessons the school's aim to embed the areas of 'Engage, Explore, Express' are very effectively realised. Group and paired work were especially effective strategies because they provided peer learning and assessment. Proactive teaching assistants provide invaluable support especially in allowing the teacher to split children into smaller groups with differentiated tasks tailored to their learning needs. Less effective teaching saw the teacher doing most of the talking and the activity often became the key element of the lesson. The scrutiny of written work paints an inconsistent picture, with marking that is both helpful and consistent; but also some inconsistencies in the presentation and amount of written work produced by children, which is sometimes allowed to pass unchallenged. Also some copied work and a significant amount of retelling of Gospel stories in place of reflective and extended writing opportunities, especially for the more able pupils. There is, however, a growing use of peer marking and assessment which draws pupils into the learning process very effectively. Pupils' work and behaviour in lessons is very good and they are enthusiastic about the subject. Their enjoyment is clearly evident.

Assessment procedures are already embedded and the school is innovative in working to align the level indicators closely to the God Matters programme. This is, however, essentially an information gathering exercise and the school recognises what is needed now is the implementation of this data to inform teaching and learning objectives. The school is well aware that this data must now be translated into the lesson plans and lesson objectives in order to

meet the specific learning needs of every pupil. The already effective and fruitful structure of lesson observations will enable the best practice in assessment for learning to be shared rapidly throughout the school.