

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

School: St. Joseph's R. C. Primary  
Address: Limes Avenue, Darwen BB3 2SG  
Telephone: 01254 706 264  
e-mail address: st.josephs@blackburn.gov.uk  
URN: 119667

Headteacher: Mrs A O'Brien  
Chair of Governors: Mr J Killalea

---

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

---

Date of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012  
Date of previous inspection: October 2009  
Reporting Inspector: Mrs Sandra Slack

## **St Joseph's R.C. Primary School**

### **Information about the school**

St Joseph's is a Roman Catholic school situated in a semi-rural area. It is slightly smaller than the average primary school. Attainment on entry is slightly lower than the national average. Free school meals are 18.7%. Most pupils are of white British heritage. There are 165 pupils on roll. The admission number is 30. 93% of the children are baptised Catholics. 11.5% of the children are on the special needs register. There are four children with statements of special educational needs. There are 7 full-time teachers and one part time teacher. 82% of the teachers are Catholics. There are 11 teaching assistants. Two members of the staff have Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or its equivalent. Since the last inspection, the school has undergone a large change in staffing and this has been a real challenge to manage. The school has very close links to the parish and the community it serves.

### **Overall effectiveness**

2

St. Joseph's is a good Catholic school. The headteacher is totally committed to the development of the whole child. The headteacher has a good vision and a strong understanding of how to improve standards at the school. The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher, staff, parish priest and governors. Improvements and efforts to raise standards for the benefit of the pupils are encouraged by the governors and staff. The staff are good role models and form good relationships with the children. The majority of the children are well behaved, polite and have a good attitude towards their work. The school is very proud of the prayer life it provides. Prayer and Worship is of the highest order and is a real strength of the school. Visitors to the school have supported this view on a number of occasions. There are many opportunities for the children to be reflective in prayer and worship.

Children regularly organize their own liturgy, prayer corners and places for thoughtful reflection on current liturgical themes and seasonal topics. The provision for religion is good and monitored and reviewed by the co-ordinator (deputy head).

The standard of the religious writing work is usually good but there needs to be more opportunities for extended writing to challenge the more able children. The school is generous in supporting a number of charities like CAFOD and CARITAS and the local community. The children are very aware of the needs of others.

2

### **Capacity for sustained improvement**

The self-evaluation of the school is accurate. The staff are hard working and there is good planning and there are very good resources. The standard of teaching in lessons is mostly good. However, in some lessons there needs to be greater focus on managing the few children who are not on task so as not to allow this to impact on the overall standards. The deputy headteacher (religious co-ordinator) has worked hard to develop policies, introduce the new scheme

'The Way, the Truth and the Light,' and ensured that the staff were well equipped with good In-service training. This ensured that staff were well prepared for the schemes implementation. There are assessment and monitoring procedures in place. These could be implemented with more detail, especially when there is a change of staff or staff absences, so that progress and continuity is not affected.

### **What the school needs to do to improve further**

1. To ensure that the quality of the work in the children's books across the school is of a consistently high standard.
2. To continue to develop strategies to improve the behaviour of the few children who are at times interrupting the lessons for the rest of the class.
3. To continue improving the relationship and communication with parents.

### **Pupils**

2

### **How good are outcomes for the pupils, taking into particular account variations between different groups**

St Joseph's is a good school. Attainment on entry is below average but the children are making progress. Over the years the school has maintained a good relationship with the local high school.

The sacramental programme is run by catechists from the parish and is strongly supported by the school. The Parish priest is a regular visitor and even with his increased work at another parish, manages to visit the school every Wednesday afternoon. Every week, the parish priest joins the children in either a class Mass or a liturgy. There are whole school Masses. The year 6 children lead weekly liturgies and select the music prayers and hymns. The Year 6 liturgy observed was very well prepared and of a very high standard. The children created a lovely prayerful atmosphere. In year 6 the children looked at how the Israelites felt when they were in Egypt and compared this to the treatment of different groups of people in their community. They answered questions in a thoughtful way and were encouraged by the teacher to participate and enjoy the lesson. Reception children received a surprise parcel from a character named 'Foxy'. They eagerly unwrapped it to find different objects to re-enact the story of a man who could not walk. The children were fully involved and able to talk clearly about this Bible story and to ask questions.

The prayer life of the school is excellent. Each class has an altar which creates a focus for the class. This is changed each half-term and is linked very well into what is happening around the word and in the children's lives. There are religious displays around the school. Each class keeps a large folder called their 'journey in prayer'. Children regularly write prayers which demonstrate reflective mature attitudes.

There is a new behaviour policy in place which staff are beginning to follow in a consistent manner. This will ensure that the few children that can cause a distraction in lessons are affectively managed.

There is a regular school newsletter. The headteacher contributes each week to the parish website so that the all the community know current focus of prayer and worship. This helps families stay informed about the Gospels.

### **How effective is the provision for Catholic education**

2

Provision for the Catholic Education at St. Joseph's is good. The majority of children make good progress. A variety of teaching methods and styles are used. Teachers make good use of the white boards, paired and group discussions and role play. Time is given for children to reflect and meditate. The children's Religious books need to highlight this very good provision and ethos. The children need to be encouraged further to improve their writing and the presentation of their work in books.

There are Religious displays around the school. The altar and focused prayer corner in each class, is a real strength of the school. The children also complete a prayer journey in each class.

### **Leadership and management**

2

The leadership and management is good. The headteacher is very dedicated and has a strong vision for the future development of the school. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher who is also the religious co-ordinator. Religion is central to the life of the school. There is a welcoming and caring attitude shown by all the staff. The parish priest makes a strong contribution to the religious life of the school. The governing body is hard working, conscientious and aware of the schools strengths and the development needs. The governors have undertaken a number of training courses. The headteacher reports on the religious life of the school at each governing body meeting. Religion informs part of the school improvement plan and objectives and targets are reviewed each year.

The headteacher encourages the parents to attend school, class Masses and weekly achievement assemblies. The parents support the work of the teachers in class Masses and assemblies. The school has made very strong progress to strengthen the relationship with parents. There has been a marked improvement with the way the school engages with parents since the last inspection.