



Diocese of Westminster

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
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DFE Number: 9193341
URN Number: 117436

Headteacher: Mr. Ian Kendal
Chair of Governors: Mrs S Jordan

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

Date of inspection: 24th October 2013
Date of previous inspection: 10th July 2009

Reporting Inspector: Mrs. T. Cleugh
Associate Inspector: Ms Cathy Doogan

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent one day in school, visited 8 lessons and 2 assemblies, and carried out 6 interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St. Joseph's, Hertford was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

Description of School

The school is a one form entry in the LA of Hertfordshire and the locality of Hertford. The school serves the parishes of The Immaculate Conception and St. Joseph's in Hertford. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 89%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 9% and from other Faiths 2%.

There are 229 pupils on roll, with 2 pupils with statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well below average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is below average. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1: Outstanding;*
Grade 1: Very Good;
Grade 2: Good;
Grade 3: Requires improvement;
Grade 4: Causing Concern.

A. Classroom Religious Education

How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?

What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?

Overall Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education is good. Pupil attainment is good overall. Pupils need to be made more aware of their levels of attainment and their next steps for progression. The leader of religious education has begun to make links with the deanery network, and is committed to further developing these links and accessing examples of models of good practice.

Where teaching and its impact on learning is good, there is effective pace and suitably challenged questioning and tasks set. Pupils with additional needs are also well supported in those lessons. The strong subject knowledge of most teachers inspires and motivates the pupils to achieve the success criteria. The use of peer assessment, talking partners and guidance through marking, both oral and written, empowers those pupils to make progress. The school is aware of its priority to address consistent marking strategies and to differentiate tasks to meet the needs of their growing numbers of pupils with additional needs across the phases.

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection and what should the school do to further improve in classroom religious education?

The school has been developing its tracking in line with the agreed levels of understanding. They are recording actual levels in line with other core subjects from year 1 to year 6, through their electronic tracking system.

The school has identified the need to:-

- Continue their links for pan Deanery/Diocesan moderation to improve the confidence and skills of all staff to assess levels of attainment
- Empower the leader of religious education to develop her role through regular participation in Diocesan training and Deanery networks.

How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?

Grade 1

The school meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. The Year of Faith units are being developed across the school. There are clear links to the programmes of study. There is evidence of some very good planning and use of a wide range of resources, including, ICT and their natural open air setting, with its scenic and colourful woodland environment. The Parish Priest assists the Headteacher in supporting the promotion of deeper levels of knowledge and understanding for all staff, of the theology being covered, underpinning the content in the Year of Faith units. These are complemented by liturgical links, including the role of Mary in the Church and the importance of the Rosary in our lives. There is evidence that the school has covered Judaism across the phases with age appropriate progression evident.

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade 2

The scrutiny of learning in the books, during observations and on display, provides evidence of sound level of challenge overall. Good progress in religious literacy is made by the end of key stage two. The examples seen by the inspectors of un-finished or under-challenged work, in some classes,

is agreed by the school as an area to be addressed. Moderation of levels of attainment in religious education is ongoing. The newly appointed leader of religious education has identified this as a priority for further development. The school is tracking progress through the levels of attainment per year group and have begun to expand this into their electronic tracking system as for other core subjects.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

A total of 8 lessons were observed across the school. The scrutiny of planning, work produced by pupil in their books, on display and work in portfolios, indicates that good teaching is evident overall. In those lessons which were very good, the pace was brisk, clear teaching strategies were used and pupils were fully engaged and motivated in their learning throughout the lesson. There was also evidence of some effective guidance and support from the other adults in the setting across the phases. Higher order questioning was also evident in the teaching and in pupil progress, especially at the end of key stage two. Where teaching was less than good, there was evidence of many pupils not engaged and less effective links in the teaching and outcomes to the learning objectives.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

The leader of religious education has recently taken on this responsibility. She has begun to make links with colleagues across her Deanery. She is ably supported and encouraged by the Headteacher and the Parish Priest. She is fully committed and ambitious for ongoing improvement and development in religious education. She has identified the key priority for her further development in this role, is to continue to develop her links with the Deanery and the Diocesan advisory service.

B. The Catholic life of the school

How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?

What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?

Overall Grade: I

The overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school is very good. Religious Education is valued and a generous status given to upgrading and replacing resources. The Governing Body is committed to sustaining this status, including the pro-active involvement of the Parish Priest. The good interaction and positive relationships between staff, parents and the parish is supporting the ongoing development and improvement for the Catholic life of the school. Worship and prayer are central, highly profiled and becoming much more child-centred and initiated. The active partnership between the school and home and through the parish with the Diocese, is very good. There is evidence of strong leadership from the Headteacher and the designated Governor, demonstrating a clear vision for Catholic education with all aspects under-pinned by belief. Governors have very good expertise and a shared vision. They are influential in contributing to the Catholic life and identity of the school.

What has improved since the last inspection and what should the school do to further develop the Catholic life of the school ?

The school has identified its commitment to developing the leadership of religious education. They have a planned programme of empowerment and development of the newly appointed leader, through a range of Diocesan in-service, Deanery network partnerships and support from the Diocesan Advisor.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget

Grade I

The school setting, in the leafy suburb of Hertford, provides a rich, green environment, including wide open spaces for the pupils. The colourful and attractive “welcome mural “, depicting their patron, St. Joseph and the school community at the entrance to the school, is a hallmark of their pride in their community. The resources are up to date, including regular access to ICT for all year groups. The development of the outdoor prayer garden, maintained regularly by one of the parents, offers unique space for reflection and prayer. The ‘cabin’ in the grounds, which also acts as an open-air classroom is another unique feature and resource available to all members of the school community. The surrounding woodland areas, with the seasonal changes in colour and perennial foliage, is well kept and used daily by the pupils. The Governing Body has invested wisely and generously to enhance the upkeep and improvement to the school building, and the most attractive outdoor areas. The school meets the 10% requirements of the Bishops’ Conference in religious education, as evident from the timetables scrutinised as part of the inspection process. There is an increase in the non-teaching staff, supporting the growing numbers of pupils with additional needs.

The school is committed to supporting the increasing number of families experiencing economic hardships.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community.

Grade I*

Prayer and worship are central to all aspects of the life of the school. This is apparent from the meeting with the pupils and some parents who met the inspectors; borne out by the Parish Priest, who is also the designated Governor for religious education and the Catholic life of the school. There is evidence from the school's 'Celebration Book,' of the rich range and engagement of pupils across the phases of liturgical and prayer life of the school. These events are very effectively woven across the year and throughout the liturgical cycle. This provides evidence of pupil participation, planned events and a richness of traditional celebrations, such as the annual May procession. The role of the pupil led 'liturgy group' who lead weekly reflections on the Gospel; the weekly distribution of the Wednesday Word, with the displayed reflections on the wonder of the Creation, enhances the pupils' responsibility as 'stewards' of Creation. These are examples of the high status given to worship and prayer. The photographic records are complemented by the responses from the pupils at interview of how they benefit across the phases from these excellent resources. They describe the prayer garden, the range of traditional celebrations and their special liturgical events as examples of how their school is "really Catholic". They were keen to explain the significance of their school song, dedicated to St. Joseph. This was created by pupils, with their music teacher. The research, carried out by pupils on the Apparitions, the Rosary, the role of Mary in the Church, is the backdrop to the names of their 'houses', Fatima, Lourdes, Walsingham and Aylesford. The 'crosses', placed reverently in the prayer garden - which is a most attractive space for quiet contemplation and reflection - and dedicated to members of the community who have died, is a focus for both planned and spontaneous prayer. The prayer garden is used regularly by the pupils, staff and parents.

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice.

Grade I*

The school effectively meets its commitment to social justice and human flourishing. Their service to those less well off than themselves, locally, nationally and globally, is well understood by the pupils. A representative group of pupils articulately outlined how they fully understand that their commitment to the common good and social justice is about how they have a responsibility to support those less well off than themselves. They proudly explained how they are 'stewards of God's creation' and how they can impact on supporting the lives of others who are vulnerable,, through a range of fundraising, prayer and active support.

Pupils are proud of their school. They realise they have a responsibility to 'protect' the creation. This is also manifested in their role in the school and how they can influence some school-based decisions, which impact on improved provision for all pupils. The 'pupil voice' committee and the 'school councillors' were proud to explain how they also participated in their "mission statement" review day, which included parents, governors and staff. They have influenced changes, nominating their own fundraising projects. These include the Catholic Children's Society, Christmas Child, Isabelle Hospice, CAFOD, the 'Big If', and their 'Kanyike' Ugandan project. They are especially proud of their work on behalf of other pupils in the school and how they have influenced decisions such as, changes to the dinner menus, upgrading the range of playtime apparatus and resources, and most especially the decisions related to the focussed fund raising initiatives. The confidence and behaviour of the pupils across the phases is exemplary. They are excellent ambassadors for their school. Their warm greetings throughout the day, their natural acknowledgments to adults and their clear sense of pride in all aspects of their school is worthy of note.

Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf;
Grade I

The vibrant Parents' Association, whose members attend all major events and celebrations, provide a strong sense of belonging and community. The Governing Body and staff support Diocesan programmes, in-service and Deanery links and networks. The triple partnership between home, school and parish is particularly strong, whereby the school is used regularly Mass and other liturgical events and celebrations. The parental questionnaire was overwhelmingly positive, with 27 % completed of which 97% agree or strongly agree with the provision of the school. This high acclaim was borne out by those parents who met with the inspectors. They particularly appreciate how much the school has influenced their children's understanding of God's love in their lives, where one parent acclaimed that, 'the school ensures our children understand our God as a loving God'. Another parent referred to the school as, 'a lovely school, they get a lot of teaching and are well aware of their prayers'. Parents feel the school is, 'very welcoming'.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school.

Grade I

The Headteacher, with the Governing Body, has a very strong commitment to the mission of the church in education. They actively develop their vision and engagement with all staff. The Governing Body is kept very well informed. The self-evaluation judgment is an accurate reflection of their commitment to challenge and support those processes identified to be in need of improvement and development. The Governing Body attends the annual school improvement event, which includes representatives of parents, pupils and staff. The themes are linked intrinsically to the identified school priorities for ongoing improvement and development. The school improvement documentation provides evidence of how religious education and the Catholic life of the school is given due status annually.



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A. Classroom Religious Education

What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?

Overall Grade 2

How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?

Grade 1

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade 2

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

B. The Catholic life of the school

What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?

Overall Grade 1

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget

Grade 1

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

Grade 1*

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice.

Grade 1*

The partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

Grade 1

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school.

Grade 1