



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Denominational (S48) Inspection Report

Name of School: St Joseph's Primary School
Local Authority: Havering

Inspection Date: 29th March 2022

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Angela O'Hara (Lead Inspector)

This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 and 2011.

Type of School:	Primary	School Address:	115 St Mary's Lane,
School Category:	Good		Upminster
Age range of pupils:	4-11		Essex
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		RM14 2QB
Number on roll:	419		
Appropriate Authority:	The Governing Body	Tel. No.	01708 220277
Date of previous inspection:	1 st July 2015	Headteacher:	Mrs Bernadette Matthews
		Chair of Governors:	Mrs Angela Podmore

Information about the school

St Joseph's is a large Catholic Voluntary Aided primary school in the town of Upminster, in the Diocese of Brentwood, with 419 pupils on roll. The school has 14 classes and the majority of pupils come from the parishes of St. Joseph, Upminster and English Martyrs, Hornchurch. Upminster is predominately an economically advantaged area, however, the school's admissions criteria and census data show that pupils come from a wider catchment area.

97% of pupils at the school are Catholic.

85% of teachers at the school are Catholic.

The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is showing an upward trend but is well below national average. Pupils with English as an additional language is 19%. The number of children with SEN is growing but is well below national averages. The number of children with high level needs is broadly in line with national averages.

The school has a well developed school to school partnership with the other six Catholic primary and two Catholic secondary schools in Havering.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Joseph's is an outstanding Catholic school. Its Catholic character is explicit and expressed through its policies and practices and through the visible signs around the school. It is most clearly expressed through the relationships in the school and in the wider community of the parishes. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. There is a sense of joy and celebration in the school and it is evident that all members of the school are valued and nurtured. Pupils, parents, governors and staff are proud of St Joseph's and recognise their contribution to making sure the school is a beacon of God's love for all. One parent wrote "the school is the centre of our parish community. It is a place of joy, worship, and love."

Pupils can articulate how they try to act in ways that are shaped by their faith and knowledge of Jesus. Many refer to the phrase 'what would Jesus do?' when making decisions and can explain how this helps them.

The school celebrates all people and encourages its pupils to strive to be the best they can be. Visible signs and displays around the school reinforce the message of growth in learning and celebration of success. The school environment is cared for and cherished and this reflects the respect and care for all those learning and working in the school. Specific signs such as banners, religious artefacts and the beautiful mosaic of St Joseph in the hall mark the school out as being distinctively Catholic.

The emphasis on a lived faith means that pupils are aware of their responsibility to look after others and especially the most vulnerable in our world. They also accept the challenge and responsibility of caring for the environment as 'Stewards of the Earth'. They are knowledgeable about the scriptures and are religiously literate when explaining their learning. Standards in Religious Education (RE) are high and pupils achieve well. This is particularly well demonstrated in the way that pupils talk confidently about their faith and their learning. Pupils know that they are part of the wider Catholic Church. Pupils are also aware that there are many other world views and perspectives and are able to show an understanding of other faith traditions.

The leadership of the school is committed to ensuring that all are able to flourish and staff are supported to enable them to provide the best education and care for pupils.

Christ is central to everything at St Joseph's and worship and prayer are given the highest priority. Because of this there is a deep sense of community which the school nurtures and protects.

What the school should do to improve further:

- Share the excellent practice in the school so that more teaching can be judged as outstanding and so that pupils are given increased responsibility to be active in their learning and challenged in their thinking.
- Continue to develop the role of the liturgy leaders so that they are able to lead their peers in wider prayer and worship opportunities across the school, including the development of the prayer focus areas to encourage interactive prayer intentions.

CATHOLIC LIFE

Grade 1

The Catholic character of the school is deeply embedded into all aspects of school life and the sense of the school as a joyful and worshipping community is palpable. The parish priest remarks that the signs of faith are everywhere in the school, that the Catholic culture is embedded and that the school is "confidently Catholic".

The leadership team, led by the headteacher who is inspirational in her role, ensures that the school's aims and mission are explicitly modelled and expressed.

The Mission Statement is succinct and understood by all members of the school community because it was developed by staff, governors, pupils and parents; it drives all actions and practices in the school. All are committed to its meaning and the challenge posed to live it out in daily actions. Pupils know the Mission Statement well and recite this with pride.

Staff are fully committed to its implementation across the curriculum. They are supported to develop their own professional practice and to develop and deepen their own faith. Staff wellbeing is a high priority and leaders ensure that staff are regularly consulted to identify areas of professional and personal need. Leaders recognise that this is a key element in securing school stability and recruiting and retaining the best staff for their pupils. There is a commitment to allowing all members of the school community to flourish.

Pupils are offered a rich and stimulating learning environment which reflects the school's unique Catholic character and which demonstrates excellence. They are offered a wide range of opportunities to enable them to explore and live out their faith. They enthusiastically participate in school activities which reflect the Catholic Life and mission. Pupils recognise that they have a responsibility to others and can confidently articulate how the word JOY helps them to understand that they should put Jesus first, others second and themselves third. They demonstrate and are committed to their faith 'in action'. This understanding is expressed through their involvement in a wide range of charitable activities both local and international, such as CAFOD and the current Walk against Hunger fundraiser, as well as more local initiatives. Individual Houses of St Anne, St Edward, St Helen and St Paul identify a charity to support each year, such as local hospices, SMILE, and The Trussell Trust. When asked about the school, one very young child (4 years old) said "We are all really kind".

Pupils are aware of their responsibility to look after our common home and older pupils are able to explain the meaning and lessons contained within Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si*. A beautiful display in the main corridor reminds pupils of how they should respond to Pope Francis' call to care for the world and older pupils explore this further as shown in a beautiful display outside their classrooms.

Pupils are enthusiastically and regularly involved with parish and diocesan celebrations and activities, for example serving at Mass in the parish, supporting the CAFOD Live Simply initiative and regularly participating in the Diocesan Citizenship Awards ceremony at Brentwood Cathedral.

Prayer is central to the life of the school and all members of the school's community actively engage in this. The relationship between the parishes and the school is a strength and because of the proximity of the parish church of St Joseph, pupils are able to worship regularly with members of the parish. The parish priest of St Joseph's is a regular visitor to the school and as well as supporting the prayer and the liturgical, life of the school, he also supports the RE programme through focused sessions to teach about topics such as Baptism, vocations and Ordination.

Displays around the school, in classrooms and in the school grounds reflect the school's Catholic character and remind pupils how they are loved and respected. The emphasis on having a 'growth mindset' encourages pupils to aim high and always do their best.

All staff promote high standards of behaviour and are exemplary role models of mutual respect and forgiveness for pupils.

The school provides extensive opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of all staff and pupils, including spiritual retreats for older pupils, such as Walsingham House for year 6 pupils. Pupils eagerly respond to the various responsibilities delegated throughout the school, such as liturgy leaders, House leaders and Ambassadors.

The school places great importance on the cultural development of pupils through activities and wider curriculum events, such as using visiting speakers and visits to places of interest. The school also provides a range of extra-curricular sports clubs.

Policies and established practices are in place and provide the highest levels of pastoral care to Pupils. These include the Rainbows programme to support loss, as well as support for emotional wellbeing. There is an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable. Pupils also recognise that they have a responsibility to help and encourage others through their work as playleaders.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are kind to each other. Every classroom has a display of the behaviour charter which sets out 'What makes good behaviour'. The school makes good use of resources and support beyond school such as the Brentwood Children's Society.

Pastoral programmes, Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE) and Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) are carefully planned and taught in line with the Bishop's expectations. Parents are consulted and well informed about the content of the RSE programme *Journey in Love* and resources produced by *Ten Ten*. This area of the curriculum is led effectively by the subject leader who, with the staff, ensures that pupils are offered a curriculum that provides for their social, moral and personal development. The programme also fully incorporates all aspects of safety education. A beautiful display on Social Moral Spiritual and Cultural (SMSC) learning reinforces this area of learning and highlights the various activities and opportunities that pupils are engaged in to develop responsibility and personal growth.

Parents are very supportive of the school and are kept well informed of school events through the newsletters and website. They are welcomed into school and regularly join the school community for class Masses. Parents speak positively about the school and parents on the school gate were full of praise. One parent said "There is an overriding sense of community at St Josephs." Another talked about the school saying "I love this school, it's like a family, a community"; and another "the teachers are kind and approachable". A number also remarked that the school challenges their children academically and that the pupils' behaviour is "exceptional". A number talked about how the use of Google classrooms gave them further insight into RE lessons during periods of lockdown.

The parents of a younger pupil wrote “We have been impressed at the spiritual and religious knowledge our son has demonstrated since beginning at the school. The school actively cultivates his faith in line with our vision as parents... and for that we are very grateful.”

The governing body is highly ambitious for the Catholic Life of the school and leads by example in the way it consistently emphasises Catholic Life as a school improvement priority. Governors have an excellent understanding of the key characteristics of a Catholic school. The Governor responsible for Religious Education meets regularly with the new Religious Education subject leader and the headteacher to review progress.

The subject leader ensures that the governing body are kept up to date with developments in Religious Education as well as all other aspects of the school’s Catholic life, most recently delivering a Powerpoint presentation to governors outlining developments.

The Chair of Governors is extremely knowledgeable about Catholic education and deeply aware of the responsibilities of the Foundation Governors as the Bishop’s representatives. She is also an active member of the parish and ensures that there is a robust system for monitoring the Catholic Life of the school.

The headteacher provides regular updates and written reports to governors and governors are active in visiting the school and attending worship when possible. Governors make a highly significant contribution to the Catholic Life of the school.

The governing body consists of governors who are active in the parish and therefore visible to the school and parish community. The governing body also has a broad skill set in order that it is able to address the full range of governor responsibilities. This is the result of a deliberate strategic plan.

The Ethos Team made up of governors and staff ensures that the school’s Catholic character is continually refreshed and strengthened, so that the parish school community continues to flourish.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Grade 1

Religious Education is given high priority at the school and leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops’ Conference in every respect and in each key stage. The school uses the *Come and See* RE programme and the required amount of taught curriculum time is given to the subject.

Pupils achieve well in RE and a high number achieve above average attainment. The quality of pupils’ current work, both in class and in written work, is good and in some case outstanding. Most RE books are well presented and show that pupils value this subject.

From their varied starting points, pupils make good progress in each key stage, with many achieving outstanding progress, developing deeper understanding and expressing this with increasingly relevant subject specific vocabulary.

Almost all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are also making progress comparable to the progress of other pupils. Pupils, relative to their age and capacity, are exceptionally religiously literate. They use their knowledge, understanding and skills effectively, to reflect spiritually and to think ethically and theologically.

Pupils show that they are fully aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. This is an area of strength in the school. Pupils can explain the words from scripture that are posted around the school and they can give examples of how they try to live out their faith. Pupils are excited about their learning in RE and there is vibrancy in their responses and in the way that they are keen to share their work and talk about their learning. During the inspection, pupils freely and enthusiastically approached the inspector to talk about their school and their learning in RE.

Pupils are actively engaged in lessons and are committed to improving their knowledge, understanding and skills, with many using success criteria to assess their own progress. All pupils concentrate exceptionally well, have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and of what they need to do to improve. They can confidently explain what they are learning and how this new learning builds on previous lessons.

All pupils approach lessons with great interest, passion and enthusiasm. One pupil said "RE challenges me" and another that "I like RE because it helps me reflect on God."

Pupils enjoy tackling challenging activities and respond exceptionally well to opportunities which extend their learning. The use of challenge questions in lessons is welcomed by pupils. In one of the upper key stage classes, pupils enthusiastically explained how they were presented with sealed envelopes which contained useful hints and tips to assist with their learning if required, or to assess their own learning. They were also given the opportunity to then open the 'mission impossible challenge' envelopes which they relished.

In another class of older pupils, they were challenged to explore the meaning of the Easter Triduum. The lesson began with a quiet reflection on the light of Christ and pupils collected small lights to take back to their seats to help them quietly reflect. The teacher posed searching questions such as, "what is the earliest evidence of God's love for his people?" Pupils were fully absorbed in the lesson.

Behaviour in lessons is outstanding because pupils enjoy RE. Pupils respond thoughtfully to questions posed by their teachers and also confidently express their own questions. They listen well to each other and show respect for the ideas of others. They are able to work well individually, in pairs and in groups.

During the inspection, not one pupil was off task at any time. In every class observed there was a climate of purposeful learning.

Teachers have a high level of confidence because of their subject expertise and their understanding of the breadth of teaching methods. As a result of this, pupils are inspired to learn and make rapid and sustained progress.

In lessons that were outstanding, teachers consistently used time effectively to maximise learning opportunities and use questioning which was probing and challenging and which extended pupils' thinking.

High quality resources, including other adults, are used very effectively to optimise learning for each pupil. The school has ensured that RE is as well resourced as other core subjects on the curriculum and pupils have access to a wide range of beautiful books, prayer resources and bibles to use in their lessons.

Pupils show an excellent understanding of the structure of the Bible, and they are keen to use bibles in their lessons to locate and examine scripture passages relevant to their learning.

All teachers communicate high expectations and passion about RE to their pupils. The newly appointed subject leader is exemplary in her role. She is passionate and ambitious for the subject and has wide ranging plans for developing the subject even more in the future. These include re-establishing moderation meetings and peer reviews across the school and in the wider deanery. The subject leader is supported by the whole teaching team and also the RE governor who has a wealth of knowledge and expertise to share and who is a regular visitor to the school.

High quality feedback, both oral and teachers' marking is frequent, leading to high levels of engagement, interest, achievement and progress. Pupils are given the opportunity to respond in a systematic and planned way, which ensures that pupils understand what they need to do to improve. This is enabled through the early morning 'fix it' time.

Acknowledgment of achievement and effort are central to each teacher's assessment strategy, which ensures high levels of motivation from pupils. Work is displayed, shared and celebrated and effort rewarded through various certificates and the use of house points. Pupils are proud of their achievements.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Grade 1

Collective Worship is central to the life of the school for all pupils and the headteacher leads this with conviction and devotion, setting an exemplary model for others to follow.

During the inspection pupils attended whole school collective worship led by the headteacher based on the Sunday gospel and using the *Ten Ten* Lenten resource on Pilgrimage to the Cross. Older pupils took an active leadership role in the worship through specific readings. The atmosphere was one of joy and celebration through response and singing, whilst also encompassing moments of deep reflection and prayer. It was evident that pupils enjoy this time in the school week. Their response throughout the period of worship was wholly attentive, engaged, and reverent.

Collective worship is thoroughly well planned and resourced and staff are supported to enable them to lead confidently. This is because the leadership of the school, including governors, recognise and promote the centrality of prayer and worship in a Catholic school.

The emphasis on pupils' responsibility to plan and lead prayer and actively contribute to worship is a developing strength of the school. Pupils show confidence and genuine excitement about taking on this responsibility. The Liturgy Team comprising the liturgy leaders who have a highly regarded role in the school, are active in planning and leading prayer and class liturgy. Pupils' leadership in liturgy has been an area of development that the school has prioritised since the last inspection and this development has a significant impact on the school's Catholic character as a vibrant worshipping community.

The themes chosen for worship across the school are in line with the Liturgical year and also reflect the topics of the RE programme.

All staff have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts and are passionate about ensuring that pupils have high quality experiences of the Church's liturgical life. Staff are highly skilled in helping pupils to plan and deliver quality worship when appropriate. They have a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the purpose of Collective Worship and the wide variety of methods and styles of prayer. This is because they are well supported through focused professional training and because many are active in their own faith.

The CPD programme planned for staff is a key area of strength in the school. This includes mentor support from colleagues in other Catholic schools in the deanery, with whom St Joseph's has excellent relationships. The headteacher is currently mentoring a newly appointed headteacher of another Catholic school in the diocese.

Praying together is part of the daily experience for all pupils and staff. Pupils know the prayers of the Church. All classrooms have beautiful and cared for prayer tables, which provide pupils with a place of focus. Prayer tables are monitored carefully by the liturgy leaders who are proud of their roles and who embrace the responsibility. One of the liturgy leaders said "when you pray to God, He sends his Holy Spirit to guide you".

All prayer tables include a Bible, candle, religious artefact such as a holding cross, as well as the appropriate coloured cloth to reflect the time of the liturgical year. At the time of the inspection, it was the season of Lent, and all tables included the appropriate coloured cloth and Lenten promises made by the pupils.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts. Pupils are able to explain the various forms of prayer and are supported in this through helpful displays which

identify these using TAPS (thanksgiving, adoration, petition and sorrow for KS2 and a simplified version for younger pupils). Pupils told the inspector that the prayers in the Gratitude Books displayed on every prayer table, were prayers of thanksgiving and that anyone could contribute to these. Another pupil explained what adoration meant and gave an example of a prayer of adoration.

During moments of prayer and in Collective Worship all pupils act with reverence. Pupils talked about how prayer helps them in their daily lives. One of the Liturgy leaders remarked that “prayer helps me live my life and helps me to be more joyful”. In one class of the youngest pupils, children gathered into a circle holding hands and sang together as the Liturgy leader set out a prayer focus in the middle of the circle. The atmosphere was prayerful and quiet and a beautiful start to the lesson.

Holy days of obligation and the feast of St Joseph are celebrated with whole school Mass at St Joseph’s church and staff and pupils work together to prepare and contribute to the liturgy.

During the inspection pupils were engaged in a powerful Easter liturgy which many parents also attended.

A written comment from a parent stated that St Joseph’s school has given its pupils “an amazing basis upon which to build their faith journey and created a lovely, safe and morally righteous place for them to live out their formative years. It has also given them a community.”