

The Catholic Diocese of Northampton



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

ST JOSEPH'S VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Gardenia Avenue, Luton, LU3 2NS

DfE School No: 821/3356

URN: 109635

Head Teacher: Mrs J Lee
Chair of Governors: Mrs L Cole

Reporting Inspector: Mrs K Yuen
Associate Inspector: Mrs F Topa

Date of Inspection: 5 December 2017
Date Report Issued: 20 December 2017

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

Information about the school

St Joseph's is a large Catholic primary school serving four parishes in Luton. There are 828 children on roll, 79% are Catholic. The school also has a similarly high number of Catholic members of staff, fifteen of whom have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies with further staff undertaking the course. The Infant and Junior school amalgamated in January 2015 and ensuring a smooth transition has been a key priority for leaders.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of the Catholic school

Grade 1

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is an outstanding school. The extremely strong Catholic identity permeates the school's daily life. The committed leadership of the headteacher, senior leaders and the excellent work of the family workers are instrumental in effectively promoting a strong spiritual purpose and high quality care and well-being of the whole school community. Pupils are very proud of being part of this Catholic school and are highly appreciative of the experiences they receive. Relationships within the school are excellent and reflect Christian love and concern for others. The pupils' personal, spiritual and moral development is outstanding and this is reflected in their excellent behaviour and positive attitudes. The headteacher has invested in training and support for all staff which is clearly evident through its impact. Achievement and progress in religious education are good. Parents praise the standard of care shown by all staff and the strong sense of community within St Joseph's.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The school has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement and development. There is a strong leadership team, all of whom contribute to the rigorous monitoring and evaluation process, therefore continuing to build on and develop the school and its Catholic life. During the previous Section 48 inspections the school had not yet amalgamated, operating as infant and junior on the same site. The areas for development from both inspections have been addressed and applied across the full primary setting. These were related to giving pupils more responsibility for developing their own spiritual lives by providing opportunities to prepare and plan class acts of worship, further raising the quality of teaching through a more creative adaption of RE plans so that input and tasks more fully engage and motivate the learning of all groups and ensuring that RE planning provides appropriate high expectations and challenge for the more able children. These areas have been fully met.

The school's self evaluation is detailed and it is clear that the school has an in depth understanding of its strengths and areas for focus. The evidence base is securely backed by thorough scrutiny and analysis. The inspectors concurred with the judgements made by the school. The staff and governors are committed to continued improvement. The RE leader and the leadership team have a realistic and accurate overall view of the school's strengths and development needs. Regular monitoring and evaluations feed into the school development plan.

The school leadership is totally committed to promoting the Catholic dimension of the school and high quality religious education. They have, very successfully, communicated an inspiring vision for the school, leading to its present effectiveness and is able to maintain and develop this even further. The school benefits from an effective chaplaincy team with highly knowledgeable members who understand the school's needs and are proactive in their support of the community.

The school with its current leadership, governance and chaplaincy team has excellent capacity to maintain effectiveness. Following the amalgamation, the school has further benefitted from the experience and expertise of its combined staff. The governing body are kept well informed and support the school well. The school is part of a strong local Catholic network that provides RE support and training.

What the school should do to improve further

- continue to improve the very good attainment of pupils by developing more precise feedback so that pupils know how to improve and have more time to respond to and build on next steps.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

The extent to which pupils benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. They know and understand the school's Mission Statement and strive to achieve it in all areas of their school life. Pupils appreciate this Catholic community and have a secure sense of their own worth and the worth of others. Pupil voice is instrumental in key decision making and pupils feel their views are heard and valued. This is evident through the exceptional work of the Faith Ambassadors, who spoke animatedly about the development of the prayer room. They have a shared vision of what it will look like and had enjoyed their research visits to other schools. Pupils undertake a wealth of varied school responsibilities and are passionate about the good they are trying to achieve. Pupils' achievements are recognised and valued. In these ways the school very strongly promotes pupils' personal, moral and social development.

Worship and prayer make an outstanding impact on pupils' spiritual development. All pupils respond extremely well to worship and the prayer life of the school. They participate respectfully and with ease and appreciate these experiences as a time of uniting the whole school community. During a Key Stage 1 Liturgy the use of expert questioning, challenge, discussion between talk partners and quiet reflection time was observed. All pupils were able to contribute. They sang in parts heartily and participated with reverence in prayer. In collective worships observed during the inspection pupils were attentive, reverent and made heartfelt responses through song and prayer. The youngest children in Reception learn quickly from the start to pray. They were able to be still and to be reflective. Pupils are proud of their outside prayer garden which offers opportunities for quiet reflection.

Chaplaincy provision makes a powerful contribution to the spiritual life and the well-being of the whole community, including parents and carers. The members of the team are known well to pupils who value and respond enthusiastically to the extra liturgical experiences and care opportunities provided. The chaplaincy team works closely together to promote the spiritual development of all pupils, the Catholic life of the school and provides valued support to staff. Pupils feel safe, cared for and know where to go and what to do when they need help. Pupils value and respond enthusiastically to liturgies devised by the chaplaincy team. Parents value the care given to their children, commenting that, "It is a real community spirit. The school works closely with the children and parents to promote the importance of love and respect for each other."

Achievement and progress in religious education are very good. Pupils come into school with standards mostly below those expected for their age and quickly make progress in the Foundation Stage. By the end of Year 6 they are in line with expectations with a proportion achieving above these. Pupils are knowledgeable about the topics they cover and can relate to them in their own lives. Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons and demonstrate excellent behaviours for learning, which makes a positive and significant contribution to their achievement. Hot-seating is used

very effectively as a means for pupils to gain a growing depth of understanding of the possible feelings and thoughts of biblical characters. This was observed during a lesson on the annunciation. Their books are well presented and evidence a range of written tasks, high standards across all abilities and a good coverage of the curriculum. Children take a pride in their RE learning which is very noticeable both in the contributions to lessons and in their written responses. A child in year 3 responded that, "To get ready in Advent we have to prepare our hearts."

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

The leadership and management is outstanding. This is due to the dynamic and effective leadership of the headteacher and other senior leaders and their relentless commitment to excellence in all areas of religious education. Strong leadership is evident in all areas of the school. Individuals demonstrate their personal commitment to the faith, and there is a collective drive towards continually moving standards forward in all areas and improving on previous best. The governing body works closely with the headteacher to ensure their clear vision for Catholic education and life is shared by the whole school community. Members of the governing body fully understand their roles and responsibilities and are well placed to be both supporting and challenging.

The headteacher, supported by other senior leaders, has been very successful in nourishing a school where catholicity pervades all areas of school life. Rigorous and regular evaluation of its religious life supports this thriving faith community. The leadership team, the chaplaincy team and family workers all work to build the excellent partnership between home and school. All staff receive valuable support through in-service training opportunities. The parents' questionnaire responses gave evidence of the overwhelmingly positive view they have of the school.

The RE subject leader is extremely effective with a clear knowledge of the strengths of the subject and an appropriate vision for improvement that is linked into the whole school development plan. All aspects of religious education planning, teaching, learning and books are monitored well and formal feedback provided to the staff. The religious education subject leader provides support and guidance to teachers. She liaises closely with the link governor. Procedures for assessment of RE are well established, pupils are assessed regularly and this shows individual progress over time. The levels given are moderated both within school and through collaboration with the local Catholic partnership. Assessment data is linked to national expectations.

Provision

Grade 1

Provision for collective worship at the school is outstanding. It is a key feature of the school and permeates all aspects of school life. It is underpinned by clear religious education and worship policies. The school works very hard to provide each child with a high quality experience of liturgy, supporting their own spiritual journeys. The pupils celebrate first Friday Mass with parishioners and contribute to the liturgy. Worship is well planned with high quality delivery using visual presentations and singing to promote pupils' interest and develop their thinking. Each class has an engaging prayer table which is attractive and appropriate to the liturgical theme. Focal points for prayer are well used incorporating candles, scripture, pictures, statues, and other relevant artefacts. These are of high quality as are displays around the school which enhance teaching and learning.

The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teaching seen across the school and evidenced in workbooks and the school's own moderation is never less than good with many examples of outstanding practice. In Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 practical activities and well scaffolded tasks keep children highly motivated and

engaged. The outside area is a valuable and rich resource for learning. Staff are creative in adapting this to support RE topics where appropriate. During the inspection children were observed visiting a stable as part of a role play of the Nativity. The children's wonder and awe was evident and the moment was made special. Teachers and support staff demonstrate outstanding subject knowledge and the impact on pupils' progress is evident in their books and the lessons observed. Planning is systematic and detailed to take account of pupils' earlier learning. Regular assessments at the end of topics allow teachers to keep a careful track on progress. Support staff are very well deployed and make valuable contributions to pupils' learning.

The quality of the religious curriculum is outstanding. The "Come and See" programme is used throughout the school and at least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. Resources are rich, well managed and support the curriculum. The parents are kept fully apprised of what the children are currently learning through a termly newsletter. Other faiths are studied and celebrated through displayed art work. The RE curriculum delivered across the whole school contributes very well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Attractive religious education displays around school give added value to this core subject.

The inspectors wish to thank the headteacher, staff, governors and children for their warm welcome and for contributing to their very enjoyable and interesting visit.