



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: St Joachim's Primary School
LEA: Newham
Inspection Date: 20th April 2015
Reporting Inspector: Pamela Brannigan

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

Type of School: Primary
School Category: Catholic Academy
Age range of pupils: 4 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 209
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: 3rd March 2008

School Address:
Shipman Road
Custom House
London
E16 3DT

Tel. No. 020 7476 1658
Headteacher: Mr J. Allen
Chair of Governors: Mr M. Coleman

Information about the school

St Joachim's Catholic Primary School is a one form entry academy in Custom House in the London Borough of Newham and part of the diocese of Brentwood. The school is part of Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy Trust. It serves the parish of Our Lady of Walsingham, Royal Docks from which all pupils come. There are currently 209 pupils aged 4-11 on roll with a further 38 part time and 6 full time pupils in the nursery. The school is over subscribed. The proportion of Catholic pupils is 100%. There is a well above average number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and 92% of pupils speak English as an additional language. Over a fifth of pupils come from refugee or asylum seeker families. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average and 71 pupils receive the pupil premium.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Joachim's is an outstanding school with a Catholic ethos which permeates all areas of its work. Outcomes for pupils are excellent as is the provision for Catholic education and the capacity for sustained improvement. Opportunities for spiritual and moral development are interwoven through religious education, prayer and an understanding of what it means to be part of a Catholic community. Leaders are excellent role models and have a clear vision for the whole school community which includes the well being of parents and families as well as initiatives linked to the Catholic life of the school. Pastoral care is shared by all members of the school community at every level and supports learning. Relationships within the school are excellent and pupils spoken to say they feel safe and well cared for. Both pupils and parents greatly appreciate the very many opportunities offered to develop a wide range of interests through before and after school clubs and lunch time activities. Parents welcome the Catholicity of the school and the way their children's prayer life is supported and developed. They are also appreciative of the way the school supports families and is able to put them in touch with other agencies when they need help. Pupils' standards of attainment are in line with and often exceed diocesan expectations.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement and has put in place systems to ensure its self-evaluation is accurate and links into the School Improvement Plan. The last inspection in 2008 identified no major areas for development other than those already stated by the school in its self evaluation. Since then standards in religious education have risen due to the implementation of the agreed understanding of levels of attainment which have informed lesson planning and assessment. Moderation meetings are held regularly in school and the deanery to share judgements with other Catholic schools. The school gives a high profile to religious education and has very good strategies to share good practice and support new teachers.

The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors have a clear vision for the Catholicity of the school and the central place of prayer, worship and religious education. The headteacher ensures that all staff are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and improve their skills through staff meetings and attendance at diocesan led training. Two teachers hold the CCRS qualification and two more are currently undertaking the course.

The current leadership has an excellent capacity to maintain effectiveness. The experienced headteacher shows outstanding leadership of a Catholic community through his commitment to all aspects of school life. He is also subject leader for religious education and is well placed to support colleagues and new teachers. He, together with the leadership team have a clear focus on prayer and worship in which they are well supported by all staff and the newly appointed parish priest. Governors are dedicated, have a wide range of expertise and are fully involved in the life of the school. Robust systems are in place to develop and strengthen initiatives which lead to good outcomes for all pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement the areas identified in the School Improvement Plan linked to religious education and Catholic life.
- Consider appointing an assistant subject leader for religious education to help the headteacher in this part of his role.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Both attainment and progress in religious education is outstanding. The very good start pupils are given in Early Years ensures that from a low base pupils make good progress year on year so that by the time they reach Year 6 attainment reaches and sometimes exceeds diocesan expectations. All lessons observed during the inspection were good or outstanding and pupils worked with interest and commitment. Pupils spoken to said they like religious education and enjoy a wide variety of activities during the lessons. They work well together whether in groups or pairs. Pupils have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and are able to apply religious ideas to their own lives. Workbooks are very well presented, show coverage of the curriculum and indicate excellent progress made by all groups. They show high levels of understanding of scripture, sacraments, Catholic teaching and moral issues. Pupils behave well and are courteous and thoughtful to adults and each other.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The mission statement, 'Playing and Praying, Loving and Learning, We achieve through God' is reviewed regularly and well known by all members of the community. Pupils respond very well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. They are keen to take on responsibilities including membership of the School Council, 'Mini Vinnies' and as prefects. Pupils themselves identify the charities they wish to support and in recent years these have included Cafod, Anchor House, a local homeless hostel and Brentwood Catholic Children's Society. They have a good understanding of the theology underpinning their actions. Pupils are encouraged to see themselves as part of a global community with responsibilities for other people and the environment. They value the sense of community and belonging created within the school.

Prayer and worship are central to school life. Pupils respond very positively to opportunities to develop their faith journey. They are given many opportunities to plan and participate fully in assemblies, masses and class acts of worship. Drama is exceptionally good and plays a major part in worship. An after school drama club prepares presentations for Easter and Christmas of a very high standard. The centrality of the Church's liturgical year with its seasons and celebrations are leading to a good understanding of the links with the sacraments and life of Christ. Each class has an attractive prayer table which is used as a focus for worship as well as a display board which includes religious vocabulary and pupils' work. Pupils are developing the ability to pray in different ways and at different times. They use scripture, the traditional prayers of the church, meditation and their own prayers, many examples of which were seen during the inspection. A Rosary club during May and October is well attended and, along with the Stations of the Cross enables pupils to become familiar with traditional Catholic devotions. As they develop, pupils are able to apply aspects of Jesus' life and teaching to their own lives and understand that a sense of service is part of being a member of a Catholic community.

Pastoral care is very good and shared by all members of staff and governors who work closely together to promote the spiritual development of pupils and the Catholic life of the community. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and know that all members of staff are there to help if they need support. Pupils value their school and all it offers. They know they are respected, listened to and encouraged to help each other. Parents speak very highly of the school, the headteacher and the care given to their children. They appreciate the support the school gives to pupils through booster classes and the help given by the enrichment teacher. They also appreciate the help offered through parent workshops and courses. They praise the excellent quality of education, the support given to their children's prayer life and the commitment and approachability of staff.

Leadership at all levels is outstanding. The dedicated headteacher and his team demonstrate excellent leadership of the school by the way they promote a clear Catholic vision to the whole community. This is affirmed by staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. The headteacher has ensured that the School Improvement Plan gives priority to Catholic Life and religious education. The current system of self-evaluation is well evidenced, detailed and accurate. The headteacher as subject leader has a very good knowledge of areas for development in religious education and is very well placed to support colleagues.

Senior leaders monitor religious education by means of lesson observations, work scrutiny and joint planning which is followed by feedback to individual teachers. The impact of rigorous monitoring results in high standards in religious education. There is currently a very strong focus on planning and assessment as the school consolidates the implementation of the 'Come and See' religious education programme and the updated Curriculum Directory. The school has put in place strategies to give further challenge to all groups of pupils. Much emphasis is placed on staff development which includes teaching assistants who play a key role in the school.

Governors work closely with senior leadership and have a very good understanding of strengths and areas for development. They are very well informed about the life of the school through the headteacher's report and frequent visits. The link governor is an experienced religious education teacher and is in a good position to challenge and support effectively. She is able to give the governing body a detailed understanding of developments in religious education which, together with the headteacher's report puts governors in a good position to challenge and support. Governors and staff participate in an annual retreat day and are closely involved in steps for school improvement. The newly appointed parish priest intends to continue to play the major role in the life of the school established by his predecessor. He plans to visit every week to get to know the pupils as well as to plan masses and liturgies. He will also act as an additional resource in classroom religious education.

Leaders ensure that the school is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. Diversity is celebrated and pupils are taught to respect other faiths. Visits to a local synagogue and mosque help pupils' understanding of Judaism and Islam as well as invitations to members of those faiths to talk to classes. There are very good links with other schools, both deanery and local authority run, through sporting and cultural events. The headteacher leads the deanery religious education co-ordinators meetings, organising joint moderation of pupils' work and sharing good practice. In addition he works to develop joint deanery projects including a Remembrance Day service and a pilgrimage to Rome. Pupils are given exceptionally good opportunities to show leadership and develop a sense of service through charitable fund raising and involvement in the local and wider community. Opportunities for spiritual development ensure that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences. Parents are invited to many school events and are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress. They appreciate the good level of contact with the school which includes curriculum information evenings and letters which enable them to support their children's education and faith journey. Parish links are excellent. School premises are used for many parish events as there is currently no church hall. Masses are usually held in St Anne's Church which is adjacent to the school. These close links enable pupils, families and parishioners to see school and parish as one community.

Provision**Grade 1**

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is excellent. During the inspection all lessons observed were good or outstanding. They are planned carefully with clear learning intentions and a varied range of activities. The school has made a major investment in resources including up to date technology and new sets of bibles for Key Stage 2 which has led to increased familiarity with scripture. Pupils benefit from the high profile given throughout the school to religious education lessons. In all classes observed pupils were fully engaged and made very good progress. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and respond well to pupils' comments as they take every opportunity to develop understanding. Higher order questioning was evident in lessons observed. Very good support by teaching assistants enables all groups of pupils to make progress. This is a feature

of lessons especially in Early Years. Marking is positive, interactive and enables pupils to identify next steps in their learning. Very good monitoring, assessment, planning and tracking supports the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is outstanding. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The programme 'Come and See' has been in place for two years and is now embedded. The headteacher gives religious education a central place in the life of the school and this is demonstrated by the budget devoted to it and the current level of resources. Vibrant religious education displays around the school emphasise the centrality of faith to the work of the community. The curriculum enables pupils to become aware of their responsibility for each other and their environment. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development. The school's programme of visits to Rome and France contribute to pupils' independence and sense of worth. The support given to families through a wide range of extra curricular activities gives a strong sense of community to the school. There is every indication that current high standards are likely to be maintained or improved.

Provision for prayer and worship at St Joachim's is outstanding. Assemblies and liturgies are very well planned and contribute greatly to pupils' spiritual development. They often include visual presentations, bible readings drama, singing and music. During the inspection a powerful assembly led by the headteacher linked the account of Doubting Thomas' need for proof of Jesus' resurrection with our own need for evidence in our daily lives. Pupils helped to prepare the hall for the assembly and members of the drama group re-enacted the part of the Easter production when Jesus appears to his disciples. Pupils participated with interest and concentration and were keen to respond to questions. Pupils are involved in collective worship several times a day in their classrooms and are given opportunities for meditation and personal reflection. Each classroom has a very attractive prayer focus with religious artefacts and display boards which include children's work. Pupils attend Mass several times a term as a class or part of a whole school Mass. They prepare for this by selecting hymns, composing bidding prayers, reading, offertory and as altar servers. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to masses, other celebrations and attendance is very high. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their knowledge of Catholic traditions through Benediction, Reconciliation, Stations of the Cross and Rosary as well as close links with the local parish.

The inspector would like to express her thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.