

St Joseph Catholic Primary School

Royal Avenue, Waltham Cross, EN8 7EN

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 18 January 2018



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- The school ensures that all aspects of the curriculum are based on the Religious Education Curriculum Directory.
- The delivery of religious education is structured to show progress and development.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. The articulation, motivation and enthusiasm of pupils are a significant strength of the school.
- Most pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith. Their religious literacy is well developed.
- Typically teaching is never less than good. It effectively ensures that pupils are engaged, good support is offered to ensure all pupils are making progress.
- The leadership team ensures staff are well supported and regularly monitors the quality of teaching.
- The SEF is accurate; developmental points are already being addressed.
- The leadership have a determination and drive to continue towards outstanding.
- The link governor and the parish priest are actively involved in supporting religious education.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- The religious education programme needs to enhance the opportunities for pupils to demonstrate deeper levels of theological understanding.
- Participation in deanery and diocesan moderation is not yet embedded.
- The recently re-structured governing body needs more time to develop their roles relating to religious education.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- Pupils across the phases are offered a rich experience of Catholic life.
- The school meets the 10% curriculum time requirement of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- Worship and prayer are integral to the day to day life of the school. It offers pupils engaging, innovative and creative experiences of the richness of the Catholic tradition.
- Pupils are pro-active stewards of the Common Good and have a deep understanding of the teaching of the Church and countless opportunities to engage in action for those in need. The children have a dynamic and deep understanding of the call to human flourishing.
- The contribution of religious education to the Catholic life of the school is a strength and its influence permeates all aspects of the stimulating learning environment across all areas of the school.
- Pupils are exemplary ambassadors for their school, demonstrating an excellent understanding of the mission of the Church.
- The headteacher, in partnership with the deputy head and all staff, is the driving force in school development and its striving for excellence.
- The governing body has a clear understanding of its strategic role as governors. They work towards making a highly significant contribution to the work and Catholic dimension of the school.
- The school's self-evaluation accurately reflects the outstanding Catholic life of the school.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

Despite significant staff turnover since the previous inspection, the school is refining its approach to ensuring consistency in the delivery of improved quality lessons in religious education (RE). These strategies have included a range of planned professional development opportunities, including diocesan training, to address gaps in subject knowledge. There are half-termly planning meetings which include using planned assessment questions to support the triangulation of evidence. A focused attention to planned differentiation in lessons ensures the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. This was evident in the planning provided to the inspectors at the beginning of the observations in the classrooms and in the work in the books, including some samples from the previous academic year. Marking is formative and developmental.

The content of classroom religious education is good

The school fully meets the requirement of the Bishops' Conference in England and Wales for 10% of curriculum time to be allocated to RE. The chosen scheme used by the school is mapped through the Religious Education Curriculum Directory, (RECD). This is supplemented by the additional time given through cross-curricular links with a variety of subjects, including PSHCE, literacy, other foundation subjects and computing. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education in the planned curriculum includes opportunities to learn about other faiths, including different faith events such as Eid and Diwali. These explorations also include different cultural experiences and events, such as Black History Month and Chinese New Year. The regular staff meetings include support from the parish priest, and the use of creative resources to bringing enjoyment and enthusiasm for the pupils across the ability range in their lessons in religious education. The different learning styles and needs of the pupils are supported by the rich range of resources and strategies employed by the teachers, including the effective use of experienced support staff. The school ensures that the intrinsic links to the diocesan levels of attainment are made across the phases.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

The school has emphasised the importance of tracking the progress of the pupils, in using the 'Agreed Understandings' in relation to the scheme being delivered. They have recently implemented a new tracking system, which includes religious education. This will enable them and the individual class teachers to access the ongoing progress of individual groups and in particular to set high expectations and challenges for more able pupils. From the scrutiny of the work in the books, there is evidence that children have the potential to work to higher levels. Pupils complete regular half-termly assessments related to the topics covered, with outcomes now being moderated, in partnership with another local Catholic school. Evidence shows that where marking is stronger, there are 'next steps' set by the teacher which give pupils opportunities to respond to the challenge set by the teacher. The tracking from Nursery to Year 6 is being moved to the new system, which should make tracking more user-friendly and effective. This has supported the school's commitment to ongoing improvement in the quality of teaching and its impact on learning and especially the improvement of the religious literacy of the pupils. They are encouraged to recap on earlier learning, to voice their opinions and share their ideas, through a range of enjoyable and flexible creative approaches. This was witnessed in observations during the inspection. The monitoring process is regular and provides a basis for the staff to measure progress over time and the importance of consistency across the phases. The analysis of the data also informs gaps in learning across the different groups of learners, in each key phase. The evidence of progress over time is recorded in the folder of exemplar work from Year 1 to Year 6. The school has identified a need to further develop and define its processes for moderation, including working in cross partnerships with diocesan and deanery schools.

The quality of teaching is good

The leaders for religious education have devised a series of strategies for ensuring that the high quality of teaching skills are consistently improved. Planned professional development, regular observations of the quality of teaching in religious education, peer observations and regular 'drop-ins,' have kept the quality of the teaching and its impact on learning as a high status across the phases. There has been an improvement in the teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of the correlation with the content required from the RECD. The ongoing professional development programme includes more experienced teachers supporting, coaching and mentoring less experienced colleagues. The revised planning models support planned differentiation, including the challenges for those pupils identified as more able, through the 'Agreed Levels of Understanding'. The development of the AT2 (Learning from Religion) experiences includes how pupils are exploring the 'Big Question,' which is changed to reflect each topic covered. The emphasis on 'quality first teaching' has been prioritised to ensure that a consistent approach is developed, including through the revised marking and feedback process. The emphasis has also been on developing pupils as independent and collaborative learners, which includes being able to reflect on their learning and experiences and to share ideas when working in groups. Homework has been used as another tool for the pupils to develop their independent research skills and to work at greater depth. The assessment for learning approach is now being embedded into all planning and target setting for ongoing commitment to excellence.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is good

The vision and values statement for the school is published on the school website. The headteacher and deputy headteacher share responsibility for leading religious education under the re-structured staffing. They are well supported by the designated governor and the parish priest. The governing body is kept informed through regular reports from the headteacher, governor visits and updates presented to the governing body. The school development plan demonstrates how religious education and the Catholic life of the school are given due status. All staff meetings begin with prayer/reflection led by a member of staff which is based on a Gospel value from the religious education being explored and this is carried through the weekly assemblies. These opportunities, for shared prayer across the community of the school, encourage them to reflect and become 'active' in living out the weekly mission. The school encourages all staff to be active in leading the year group collective worship each term. The leaders of religious education network with diocesan officers and more recently with local cluster schools. They share in local and deanery training and moderation. The school encourages ongoing continuing professional development where participation in the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) is encouraged, with six members of staff holding the qualification. The management of religious education also includes the very active role of the pupils in the chaplaincy team, who are given a more prominent and pro-active 'voice' and role in the development of strategies. Their enthusiastic participation informs the progress of some of the priorities identified in the action plan for religious education and the Catholic life of the school.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Further develop resources that enable pupils and children to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the theology underpinning the concepts being delivered.
- Fully embed the tracking system so that underachievement can be more effectively identified.
- Fully embed the processes for widening its networks with other deanery and diocesan schools, for the purpose of more accurate moderation.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The school mission statement is set out in a 'child-friendly' version, which succinctly describes their high expectations and is explicitly aligned to the Catholic life of the school. The growth of the school chaplaincy team has empowered pupils to explore the key principles of Catholic teaching, which are shared during weekly assemblies. There are a variety of activities throughout the liturgical year to inspire the pupils in the development of their faith.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

The school fully meets the 10% requirement for provision for religious education as laid down by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The school generously funds the participation for colleagues to participate in the CCRS accreditation. The governing body ensures that budgetary allocations for religious education is at least equal to that for other core subjects. There is also funding for the Catholic life of the school, including setting aside funds for the development of their 'Prayer Garden' in the forest school and the 'Mary Way' school perimeter 'walk of reflection.' The staff across the levels of the school, including the senior leaders, are funded to support their attendance at diocesan training and conferences.

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

is outstanding

The vibrant, visual, stimulating displays across the school demonstrate clearly how prayer and worship are central to the daily life of the school. The prayer group leaders are rightly proud of the role they play; they are actively involved in developing innovative practice that they share amongst the whole school community. An example of this is the way they take the Wednesday Word to each individual class and share the Gospel for that week; they also generate a 'thought for the week' independently, that is shared with every class and clearly displayed in the prayer areas in the classrooms. The liturgical cycle is celebrated, including the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. The school has developed its partnership with the parish, such as supporting the preparation for pupils in Year 3 for First Holy Communion and in Year 4 for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Pupils are actively encouraged to participate in the preparation, planning and delivery of assemblies and other worship opportunities throughout the liturgical year. A Year 6 assembly explored the importance of global warming and the carbon footprint, bringing together a variety of curricular links. The pupils are encouraged to demonstrate their understanding of Catholic traditions through a range of creative ways including drama. The prayer focus in each class is monitored regularly to ensure the liturgical calendar is reflected. All meetings begin with a prayer. The parish priest is a regular and active visitor, supporting staff with their planning and subject knowledge, and the chaplaincy team to prepare a range of liturgies. The RE action plan is regularly updated reflecting the growth of the Catholic life of the school. Pupils are also supported to understand other faith traditions, including visits to places of worship and visits from faith leaders and representatives, explaining the importance of their faith for their communities.

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

is outstanding

The respect for themselves, for those of their own and other cultural, social and religious backgrounds underpins the relationships and behaviours of all members of the school community. Pupils are being empowered to explore the ethics and areas of social justice and the Common

Good, through planned cross-curricular teaching. Many resources are used, secular and religious, including those from Cafod. The 'Dragon's Apprentice Challenge' for Year 5 pupils, called the 'Four Swans Vision' project, supports class based fund-raising for a charity supporting the visually impaired. An outstanding example of this is where the chaplaincy team explained to the inspectors how they are eager to join with other deanery and diocesan chaplaincy teams, to pool their fundraising ideas and be ambitious to provide a 'health clinic'. The school's commitment to cultural diversity and equality is celebrated, for example, through their 'International Schools Award,' and how they explore cultural diversity in numerous ways. The pro-active participation of pupils is wide ranging. These events are developing roles of responsibility for the pupils so they understand and demonstrate their response to the call to social justice and the Common Good. Pupils are confident and enthusiastic about their learning and their faith. They feel very pro-active and empowered in determining how the Catholic life of the school is developed. The school has recently become involved with the parish Caritas, 'Love in Action' group, supporting the call to Catholic social teaching. The school has provision for those pupils with emotional and mental health issues through their well-being programmes and nurture groups.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

is outstanding

The school actively participates in the local deanery liturgical celebrations and training opportunities. The leaders in the school demonstrate effective role models as Catholic leaders, committed to their mission statement, vision and values. The school website demonstrates the school's commitment to spiritual development and the general Catholic life of the school. Parental engagement is regularly used to ensure that the partnership with the parents includes key school based strategies and action plans. There is an 'open-door' policy and the senior leaders are daily available to parents. One parent explained how it is "heart-warming how our children are so involved with all the religious aspects in their other activities and especially how they want to pray at home". The school ensures that parents are invited to attend the full range of liturgies and celebrations. The school is developing its networks through the deanery, local and diocesan levels for moderation, training and sharing models of good practice. The growing partnership with the parish in particular has the regular pro-active support of the parish priest.

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

is outstanding

The headteacher and the deputy headteacher, leading the school in partnership with the governing body, ensure that the ethos of the school reflects its mission statement of 'We live, love and learn by the example of Jesus.' This is woven into the very fabric of the day to day life of the school. The Catholic life of the school is integral in the every-day experiences and relationships between adults, between pupils, and between pupils and adults. The re-structured governing body has a clear strategic vision and the determination to develop the Catholic life of the school still further.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Develop further the opportunities for quiet reflection, such as the planned prayer room, building on pupil expertise in the use of this holy space.
- Develop further the links with other pupil chaplaincy teams, in order to share their vision in promoting the Common Good.
- Develop further plans to work in partnerships with other schools, to develop and share good practice.

Information about this school

- The school is a one form entry Catholic Primary school in the locality of Waltham Cross.
- The school serves the parish of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception and St. Joseph, Waltham Cross.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 99%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 0.4% and from other faiths is 0.4%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 70%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 6.
- There are 10% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 2 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average.
- There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 26 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (11%).

Department for Education Number	117479
Unique Reference Number	9193327
Local Authority	Hertfordshire

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	3 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	237
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael McKay
Headteacher	Mr Anthony Gorton
Telephone number	01992 629503
Website	www.stjosephs351.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stjosephs351.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	July 2013
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Good
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 8 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 1 assembly.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

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Lead Inspector

Mr Michael Ross

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