

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Highgate Hill, Islington London N19 5NE

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 3 October 2019



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- The religious education programme meets all the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* in an outstanding way.
- Achievement is excellent and pupils from the very start of their education are articulate, passionate and make outstanding progress.
- Religious education lessons are inspiring and creative with the use of ICT, art, drama and music used to ensure that pupils are actively engaged in their learning.
- There is a strong culture of critical thinking amongst pupils leading to a deep understanding and expression of their Catholic faith.
- The very vibrant, stimulating, child-centred environment contributes to extremely high levels of engagement across the school.
- Teaching is of the highest quality at all levels across the school.
- Pupils are very religiously literate and able to articulate their knowledge and understanding in a relevant way.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is frequent ensuring high standards and expectations are maintained.
- The 'religious education faculty' model is an outstanding example of distributive leadership resulting in an ethos of excellence in religious education.
- The commitment to high quality resources and provision supports pupil progress and engagement.
- Governors are outstanding in their support, challenge and commitment to Catholic education.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The school fully meets the 10% curriculum time requirement set by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- The schools' Catholic identity is evident to all who enter the building through the outstanding displays, artefacts, relationships and opportunities for pupils to flourish. Pupils are offered a rich and dynamic experience of Catholic life, which is evident at all levels.
- Catholic Social Teaching is at the heart of the schools commitment to the Common Good. Pupils are confident and very articulate in their understanding of their call to social justice and human flourishing.
- Prayer and worship are central to this vibrant worshipping community. The outstanding and abundant provision for prayer, collective worship and liturgical life of the school provides opportunities for all members of the school community to develop their spiritual relationship with God.
- The very highly regarded 'pupil chaplains' are passionate about their role and their commitment to supporting other pupils in both learning and worship.
- The outstanding links between the school and parish lead to a very strong partnership supported by the relationship with the very highly regarded parish priest.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive and appreciative of the impact the school has on their children's faith journey.
- The inspirational executive headteacher, head of school and the 'religious education faculty' team are the driving force in this truly outstanding Catholic school.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

Catholic Social Teaching is now embedded across the school and themes shared with parents at 'Stay and Play' and 'Stay and Learn' sessions. The school is a model of excellence for other schools across the diocese with the executive headteacher supporting several other schools. The school shares best practice by hosting visits from other schools and sharing their exciting and creative curriculum. The school are not complacent and always self-evaluating to ensure that they continue to improve and seek the best for their pupils.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The religious education curriculum is securely mapped against the content of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD) ensuring that the needs of all pupils are met. The curriculum is creative, rich, dynamic and ensures that pupils have the very best learning opportunities in every lesson. Religious education (RE) is exceptionally well resourced with a very generous budget allocation. Teachers are highly creative in the way resources are used to support children's learning and provide for a range of learning styles, needs and abilities. Progression across the school is clearly evident in very well presented pupils' workbooks, in discussions and during lessons. The teaching of other faiths including Islam and Judaism makes meaningful links with key beliefs and practices and pupils enjoy their learning in these areas. Pupils were very passionate about how much they enjoyed RE lessons and spoke with confidence and maturity about what they were learning in RE classes and what it meant to them.

Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

Pupils of all ages learn exceptionally well at St Joseph's. Characteristic of the achievement of pupils across all key stages is the way in which they can articulate their understanding and learning. From the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) where children receive an outstanding start to their journey through the school the children at St Joseph's are confident, enthusiastic, passionate learners who make excellent progress due in part to the high quality resources and provision provided both indoors and outdoors. The pupils show high levels of curiosity, imagination and concentration and are proactive independent learners. A child in the Reception class spoke about being 'a steward for the earth' while making a bug hotel in a lesson about God's creation. Pupil responses in lessons along with work in books demonstrates the progress made from their starting points. Attainment data is rigorously and regularly analysed by the RE faculty team and is in line with, and often better than, other core subjects. Teachers have exceptionally high expectations of pupils leading to pupils being confident to take risks in their learning. Technology was well used and the use of QR codes both in pupil books and on displays around the school makes learning both current and accessible. Pupils with additional needs make very good progress and are well supported by the very well deployed support staff.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

The quality of teaching at St. Joseph's school is mostly outstanding and never less than good. The robust and regular monitoring of lessons, books and data leads to this outstanding teaching. Staff at all levels have very high expectations and therefore, behaviour for learning is exemplary throughout the school. Teachers have very strong subject knowledge and are very well supported to plan and deliver lessons that are creative, challenging and fun. Pupils are encouraged to think deeply and given opportunities to reflect on their learning. In a Year 2 class a pupil felt secure and encouraged to think and rethink their response to the name of the scripture being discussed and finally responded with confidence to answer 'The Creation Story.' In a Year 6 class pupils were challenged to think

carefully about the distribution of world resources and made links with 'Laudato Si.' The school has embedded their current affairs work and this is very evident in displays around the school and in links that pupils can make within their RE lessons. This is a real strength of teaching across the school and pupils are confident and passionate about making connections in this way. In a Year 3 lesson about God in the world around us, pupils linked 'Laudato Si' to the current climate change protests and the work of Greta Thunberg with a pupil telling inspectors, 'We have a duty as stewards of God's creation to look after this world. It is our duty!' Teachers use questioning skillfully including higher order questioning. Marking and next step questions are developed well and pupils were able to confidently explain how it helps them to improve their work. RE word of the week is on display in classrooms and supports pupils' religious literacy. New teachers are teamed with experienced teachers to ensure collaborative planning and use of resources, which enhances the quality of teaching across the school. Support staff are very well deployed and have an intrinsic role in supporting the learning for all abilities. Behaviour of pupils in lessons, on the playground and around the school was exemplary.

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

The leadership and management of this Catholic school are outstanding. There is a very clear model of distributive leadership that demonstrates a commitment to continued school improvement and to ensuring that the strong Catholic ethos of the school permeates all areas of school life. The Executive headteacher along with the head of school and the RE faculty team are visionary and inspiring in their leadership. School self-evaluation is very thorough and accurate, and strongly evidence based. Teachers are very well supported through resources, mentoring and professional development. There is a creative approach to religious education which results in highly engaged and committed teaching and learning, and excellent progress being made across all key stages. Teaching is regularly and robustly monitored and staff supported at all levels. The RE faculty along with the very experienced governing body focus relentlessly on improving teaching and learning, resulting in an outstanding experience for all pupils. The documentation and record keeping provided to the inspection team was comprehensive and of a high standard.

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

- Continue to work on assessment, with particular regard to Diocesan recommendations.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The school has developed the role of 'pupil chaplain' within the school since the last inspection. The role is highly sought after by pupils; their peers, along with the school and parish community, hold them in high esteem. The school have also further developed pupil led worship and pupils are now confident to plan, prepare and deliver acts of worship at all levels.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

Religious education receives the 10% of curriculum time as required by the Bishops' Conference. Religious education has an exceptionally high status within the school. The beautiful school chapel is highly valued and respected among staff and pupils. The faculty team work tirelessly to ensure that the pupils are provided with the very best opportunities and staff are supported in their professional development. The school is an exceptionally vibrant learning environment both inside and out with high quality displays, murals and prayer areas around the school. The school outdoor environment is truly exceptional and now has a spiritual walk with signposts of reflection such as, 'We can't help everyone but we can help someone.' Some displays and work in books are made interactive with QR codes, bringing them to life. An exceptionally generous budget is allocated to RE and is well spent. Senior leaders and governors are totally committed to developing, reviewing and improving all aspects of Catholic life, providing excellent support and guidance to achieve the very best outcomes.

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

is outstanding

St Joseph's is exemplary at being a community based on Catholic tradition and practice. Worship and prayer are central to the daily life and evident in every corner of the school. The pupils' liturgical formation is planned to ensure the widest possible experiences of the richness of Catholic prayer and worship. The recently introduced '3 Minute Retreats' are a new resource available to staff and pupils when planning collective worship and a Year 6 class showed maturity, respect and reverence during such an act to start their school day. Children in Early Years Foundation Stage are quickly introduced to a rich Catholic tradition of prayer in a nurturing way. Pupils are experienced at preparing and leading worship from the beginning of their time at St Joseph's. Mass is celebrated regularly as a whole school community, as a class, as a House and on Feast days. The 'pupil chaplaincy' team lead the Rosary during May and October with parents, staff and pupils. The celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation are important within the school's Catholic life. The school provides opportunities to learn about other faiths including Judaism and Islam. Pupils are encouraged to see the beauty of God's creation and to be thankful for what they have been given by appreciating the school grounds. These include a tree house, an outdoor classroom, vegetable beds, a mini orchard and hen and rabbit enclosures. Produce from the school garden is sold and given to the school kitchen; eggs are sold daily in the playground providing a community base for parents at drop off time. The outstandingly strong school/parish links ensure that the celebration of the Eucharist is at the forefront of the school's Catholic tradition.

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

is outstanding

The school mission statement is the corner-stone upon which the school shares its responsibilities as a Catholic community towards others at a local, national and global level and it does so in an exceptionally outstanding way. The RE curriculum and Catholic life of the school provide a wealth of

meaningful opportunities for pupils to recognise Christ in others and to reflect on their duty as Christians, supporting the Church's mission to those in need. Every pupil is valued as an individual and there are many opportunities to celebrate their talents and to serve each other; older pupils are buddies to younger pupils, Eco warriors, Digital leaders and the 'pupil chaplaincy' team. Pupils are very aware of their call to serve and do so with enthusiasm and pride. The school works hard to inspire pupils in turning their words into actions in order that they live out the call to contribute to the human flourishing of themselves and others. Charities the school engage with include: the Whittington hospital, the Catholic Children's Society and the Poppy Appeal. When a major disaster occurs pupils are inspired to respond to the call of need such as the recent victims of Storm Dorian. The school sponsors a school in Uganda as part of the Kafunjo Project and each class organises their own fundraising initiative for this project. Pupils also respond sensitively to personal situations that arise like the recent death of a teacher from cancer. Pupils are proud of their school and parish community and understand the importance of working together. Pupils reported that, 'Jesus said, we should love our neighbour,' They explained that this is the reason why their fundraising is so important. Pupils throughout the school were very clear about the links between Pope Francis' letter '*Laudato Si*' and our responsibility to look after the world, by being stewards of this earth.

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 partnership with parents, parish and diocese is extremely strong. The very high return of the parents' questionnaire revealed exceptionally high levels of support, respect and trust in the school. One parent wrote, 'The school is the epitome of what a Catholic school should be.' Parents are kept informed about the religious education curriculum and the 'Wednesday Word' is distributed weekly to families. Every Friday parents are invited to 'Stay and Play' in EYFS or 'Stay and Learn' in Years 1-6. The school website and strong communication all support the outstanding relationship the school has with parents. RE newsletters and the newly introduced 'Chaplain Chat' keeps parents informed. There are strong links with the parish and the parish priest is an integral and much loved member of the school community. He provides invaluable spiritual guidance to school staff, celebrates many services throughout the liturgical year and accompanies Year 6 pupils on their annual residential trip. The school supports diocesan led professional development as well as taking part in deanery opportunities with local schools. The executive headteacher is currently leading three other diocesan schools and a number of governors are supporting a local secondary school.

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

is outstanding

The school's leadership team, led by the inspiring executive headteacher, is fully committed to the Church's mission in a vibrant and dynamic way. The school mission statement, 'Our family at St Joseph's learns, loves and grows with God at the centre.' is embedded across the school. The head of school and the RE faculty team are highly ambitious with an outstanding commitment to ongoing improvement in all areas. Self-evaluation is honest and highly accurate. Parents are certain that the Catholicity of the school is of the utmost importance to the staff and governors. The governing body are committed and conscientious in their role; they know their school well and play an active part in the school and wider Catholic community.

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

- Continue to build on the already established links with the parish giving pupils more opportunities to witness to their faith in action within the local community.

Information about this school

- The school is a two form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Archway.
- The school serves the parishes of St Joseph's, Highgate and St Gabriel's, Upper Holloway.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 91%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 5% and from other faiths is 3%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 71%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 7.
- There are 8.5% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 5 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 an above average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 99 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (22.5%).

Department for Education Number	206 3483
Unique Reference Number	100441
Local Authority	Islington

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	3 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	463
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Lasok
Headteacher	Miss Clare McFlynn
Head of School	Mrs Angela Noronha
Telephone number	0207 272 1270
Website	www.st-josephs.islington.sch.uk
Email address	office@st-josephs.islington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 April 2015
Grades from previous inspection	
Classroom religious education	Outstanding
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 16 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended a prayer service and a number of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mrs Ann Staunton	Lead Inspector
Ms Kathleen Faherty	Associate Inspector
Mrs Margaret Hanley	Associate Inspector
Mr Patrick Murphy	Associate Inspector

Information about inspection

The purpose of Diocesan inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The inspection report is also used to inform parents and carers, and the wider Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools. It also assists schools in the work of self-evaluation and improvement, and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

This report is published by the Diocese of Westminster and is available at:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

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