



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Inspection Report



Name of School: St Joseph's Convent School

LEA: Redbridge

Inspection Date: 1st December 2015

Reporting Inspector: Pamela Brannigan

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

Type of School: Primary
School Category: Independent
Age range of pupils: 3 - 11
Gender of pupils: Girls
Number on roll: 171
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: 1st April 2011

School Address:
59 Cambridge Park
Wanstead
London
E11 2PR

Tel. No. 0208 989 4700
Headteacher: Ms C. Glover
Chair of Governors: Sr C. Quane

Information about the school

St Joseph's Convent School is an independent Catholic day school for girls aged 3-11 in Wanstead and part of the diocese of Brentwood. There are 149 pupils on roll plus 22 in the full time Nursery, 66% of whom are Catholic, coming from several local parishes. The school has a stable staff; 85% of teachers are Catholic. The trustees of the school, the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy appoint the governors, two of whom are Sisters of Mercy. The school has good links with Our Lady of Lourdes parish although most pupils come from a wider area. The school offers a large number of extra-curricular activities.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Joseph's Convent School is outstanding in its effectiveness in providing Catholic education. The headteacher together with the governors and members of the senior leadership team is very effective in promoting the Catholic dimension of the school. There are good links with the diocese and the secondary schools to which pupils transfer. Staff are excellent role models for the pupils. Prayer is an integral part of the school's daily life and is central to spiritual and moral development. Behaviour is very good and pupils work hard and thrive within a strong Christian community where they feel loved, well supported and safe. Teaching is good and often outstanding. During the course of their time in the school, pupils make excellent progress.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The school has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement. The headteacher supported by governors has put in place a number of initiatives linked to teaching and learning in recent years including the 'Come and See' religious education programme. There is a strong commitment to frequent self-evaluation and improvement. The Catholic dimension of the school is strengthened through the very good pastoral care, good parish links and the continuing support of the founding order. The head teacher, ably supported by all members of staff, ensures the Catholic mission of the school is explicit and understood by the entire school community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to address those areas currently identified in the school development plan
- As the standard of achievement is high the school should widen existing moderation to include secondary schools to ensure a good understanding of evidence needed for the higher levels of attainment in religious education.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

The quality of pupils' learning and progress in religious education is outstanding. Pupils' behaviour for learning is excellent. They are interested in their lessons and co-operate and work well individually and in pairs. They enjoy the wide range of activities involved including discussions, drama, role play and art. Planning includes differentiation and support at appropriate levels which leads to pupils making rapid and sustained progress. Pupils understand their learning objectives and respond very well to the opportunities provided. They are gaining religious literacy at a very good rate throughout the school. Workbooks are

very well presented and demonstrate a range of interesting written tasks. Overall they make excellent progress and achieve and often exceed diocesan expectations.

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is also outstanding. Pupils know and understand the mission statement and the corresponding Christian values. They have a strong sense of belonging and say they try to follow the teachings of Jesus in their own lives. Pupils express their own views with confidence and are eager to participate in all aspects of school life. Their achievements in and out of school are valued and recognised. Pupils are friendly and ready to help each other; they feel valued, safe and well supported. Older pupils appreciate the many opportunities offered to develop a sense of service and to show leadership as prefects and members of the school council. Pupils are also aware of the needs within their own community and the wider world. Charities supported include Cafod, Brentwood Catholic Children's Society and Haven House. They also sponsor the education of a girl in Uganda as well as helping her family and community. In this way the school strongly supports pupils' social and moral development.

Prayer and worship make an outstanding impact on pupils' spiritual development. They know formal prayers appropriate for their age group and are given opportunities for reflection and spontaneous prayer. During collective worship they are attentive and responsive. Assemblies begin with prayers and include scripture references. All classrooms have a prayer table with a bible, statue and other religious artefacts which provides a focal point for reflection. Pupils are encouraged to compose their own prayers and examples were seen during the inspection. The exceptionally high standard of singing enhances worship and assemblies. The Church's liturgical year is celebrated through assemblies and masses in which pupils play a major role. Services for Reconciliation are prepared by pupils who also lead the May procession.

Pastoral care is regarded as the shared responsibility of all staff although the parish priest from Our Lady of Lourdes parish visits every week and acts as school chaplain. Pupils know where to go for help if they have a concern about themselves or other pupils. Older girls take their responsibilities for younger pupils very seriously. In conversation pupils said they feel safe, well cared for and believe their views are valued and taken into account. They talked enthusiastically about their involvement in the wider life of the school.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

The leadership of the school's Catholic life is outstanding. The experienced head teacher has a clear vision for the school which is shared by all members of the community. All the staff clearly promote the Catholic life of the school and are excellent role models for pupils. Senior management including governors regularly evaluate provision for Catholic life. The Catholic ethos of the school is stated through its mission statement and evidenced in its daily life and within the wider community. There is a range of lovely religious education related displays in classes and around the school which are linked to topic themes, the liturgical year, particular events or specific prayers.

The subject leader for religious education is very well supported by school leadership who are highly motivated to keep abreast in current developments in the subject particularly in regard to assessment and moderation of levels of attainment of pupils' work. The subject leader attends diocesan conferences and has moderation meetings with other Catholic schools. Together with the headteacher she ensures religious education is regarded as a core subject throughout the school. She acts as mentor for new teachers and is also able to support or work alongside colleagues when necessary. In-service sessions are used effectively to support and develop staff skills and subject knowledge. Regular monitoring of planning and assessments enables school leaders to have a good knowledge of where extra support is required.

Trustees and members of the governing body are experienced, aware of their responsibilities and understand the strengths of the school. They are extremely knowledgeable about the school and have a good understanding of its day-to-day activities. There are regular monitoring visits from individual governors and reports prepared for the full governing body. Governors are kept well informed about new initiatives in religious education and how these are being monitored. They are fully involved in the Catholic life of the school.

The school is highly regarded by its parent body. The parent governor has been linked to the school for many years and is well placed to give the governing body the 'parents' view.' Communication is excellent with curriculum booklets sent home every term. In addition all families receive the 'Wednesday Word' to enable parents to support their children's learning in religious education. Parents appreciate the high standard of education, the care shown to pupils and the wide range of extra-curricular activities available. They are invited to school celebrations including masses, concerts and the May procession.

Provision

Grade 1

During the inspection all teaching observed was very good or outstanding. This is the result of good planning, lively pace and open and challenging questioning. In a Prep 1 (Year 3) lesson on 'The Jesse Tree' the teacher gave particularly good explanations to aid understanding of Jesus' family tree. This was followed by a research task supported by the teacher and a teaching assistant. Excellent resources including sufficient bibles are available to support children in their study of scripture and biblical knowledge. Differentiation of tasks enable all pupils to engage with the learning objective. In Key Stage 2 pupils are encouraged to identify sources of revelation and quote from them in their written work. Key words and religious terminology are emphasised which enables pupils to use correct vocabulary. Workbooks are well presented and reflect pupils' pride in their work. Marking is positive and includes 'next steps' for pupils. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teaching assistants are effectively deployed. They provide good support enabling all groups to make excellent progress.

The school devotes 10% of teaching time to religious education and uses the scheme, 'Come and See,' supported by 'All that I Am' The curriculum is enhanced through effective links with local clergy and Brentwood diocese. Pupils are given an excellent foundation in Early Years. During the inspection Advent was explored through story followed by a carousel of cross curricular activities. Drama and art are also incorporated into the curriculum. Other faiths are well taught through outside speakers, sharing experiences and research. The curriculum is further enriched through the school's charity work and musical flair.

Worship and prayer are central to the school's life. Leadership ensures collective worship is well planned and there is a variety of formal and informal opportunities for daily prayer. Masses are celebrated in school and special assemblies are held which reflect the Church's liturgical year. Pupils regularly plan and lead worship with confidence and enthusiasm. The school promotes devotion to Our Lady through Rosary groups in May and October and an annual May procession. There are plans in place to celebrate the 'Year of Mercy' beginning in Advent. Pupils from all faiths are included and benefit from the many opportunities to learn from each other. As well as the exceptional singing, the school offers a very wide variety of clubs and enrichment activities which provide opportunities for the development of skills and interests. The school is outstanding in the way pupils' sense of service is developed and faith journey is supported.

The inspector would like to thank all members of the school community for the warm welcome and the hospitality extended during her visit.