

INSPECTION REPORT

St Joseph's RC Primary School, Shepherd Cross Street, Halliwell, Bolton, BL1 3EJ

Inspection date 30th November 2015

Reporting Inspector Mr Jim Graves
Mr Damian Harrison

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Primary School
 URN 105223
 Age range of pupils 4 -11
 Number on roll 202
 Appropriate authority The governing body
 Chair of Governors Mr A Kearney
 Headteacher Mrs N Rabbett
 Religious Education Subject Leader Miss E Palmer
 Date of previous inspection December 2010

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	2	
The quality of the Word of God community	2	
The quality of the Welcome community	2	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	2	
The quality of Witness	1	

The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Joseph's is a Voluntary Aided RC Primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of St Joseph's Bolton. Pupils are arranged in single aged classes. The admissions number is 30. The headteacher was appointed in September 2013. The deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2015. The school is situated 0.3 miles from the parish church. The pupils are drawn from a wide and varied catchment area consisting of owner-occupied, social housing and rented accommodation. 57% of pupils are baptised Catholics. Standards on entry to Reception are broadly below average. 57% of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals. 18% of pupils have been identified as having Special Educational Needs. 22% of children have English as an Additional Language.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Joseph's is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and the deputy headteacher plays a pivotal role in school improvement. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and gives a good indication of the next steps for the school. The governors are well informed and have a regular presence in school to both quality assure information, and have an impact on its direction. There have been significant changes in the school but it is now starting to enjoy some stability in its senior staff. This is leading to a greater sense of purpose and direction. The staff show a high level of care and nurture for the pupils. The Chaplaincy team are influential and pro-active in their positive contribution to the Catholic life of the school. Despite a low academic starting point, there is evidence to show the children achieving expectations. Parents are very supportive of the school, saying it was very friendly, offering a lot of support to children and parents. The school has fully met the improvements recommended by the previous Section 48 inspection.

KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The headteacher, has shown strong leadership and is well supported by the deputy headteacher, has successfully led the school through recent transient times.
- This is an extremely inclusive school where all pupils feel valued and accepted for who they are.
- Care, guidance and support is outstanding. Support for vulnerable pupils is a strength of the school.
- The work of the school chaplaincy team is a strength and they have future plans for development.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS GOOD

The headteacher has a very clear knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and has focused actions plans to address the next stages of the school's development. The leadership of the school feels that the Catholic ethos is promoted through worship, celebrations, charitable works and SMSC and that it is fully embedded in all areas of the curriculum. This was observed as a priority for the development of the pupils throughout the inspection. The headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher, has successfully led the school through turbulent times over recent years. The governors have supported and challenged the school effectively during this time. School leaders have set up links with outside agencies to support vulnerable children. Religious Education is well led by the RE leader, who effectively supports the headteacher. The strong chaplaincy team have been set up to have an impact of pupil well-being. The head and deputy ensure that the environment is vibrant and celebrates the Catholic ethos of the school. Staff have undergone training; they are confident and effective in their spiritual and pastoral roles. The school leadership ensures that St Joseph's is particularly responsive to the multi-faith, multi-cultural society that we live in. One child said, "It doesn't matter who you are, it's not just Christians, other religions are important too." The curriculum prepares the children well for being accepting and tolerant of others. The governors make a significant contribution to the school, including taking part in work scrutinies, safeguarding audits, talking to children and regularly visiting school to see school life first hand.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS GOOD

Scripture is abundant around the school and familiarity with and reference to the Bible is strong. The mission statement says that it is committed to following the example of St Joseph, as he was called to “love, protect, educate and nurture”. This was evident throughout the whole school, with care and nurture being a non-negotiable in everything that the inspectors observed. Children knew these four aspects of the mission statement in lessons and when interviewed. It was also evident in the school’s policies. Displays contributed to the mission’s centrality. Religious Education is monitored and the subject is appropriately resourced. Standards in RE books are of a similar quality to Literacy and achievement in RE is good. St Joseph’s School feels that the Word of God is integral to the school’s identity. The school uses the RE system of work ‘Come and See’, but this is supplemented by Caritas in Action to give a broader curriculum. Scrutiny of the children’s work illustrates a good understanding of the Catholic faith for their ages. Religious Literacy is of a good standard and this was observed when Key Stage 1 children were able to articulate clearly about Baptism. Word is enhanced by RE theme days such as during a Multi-Faith Week, retreat days and the pupil chaplains, as well as through parish links, for example the Christ the King Family Fun Day. Lessons observed showed that the children were making good progress. The RE Policy states that, ‘At the heart of all we teach must be the love of God, of His people and of His world’. This was observed in a Key Stage 2 lesson, where the children explored how they can make the world a better place through their own individual actions.

THE QUALITY OF THE WELCOME IS GOOD

Inspectors were made very welcome by all members of the school community. The parents of new children entering the Reception class are welcomed through a parents’ meeting or ‘meet the teacher’ sessions at the start of each year. All year 6 pupils, including the school chaplaincy team, showcase the school by preparing a meal for their families before leaving at the end of the school year. The atmosphere in school is positive and welcoming. Parents and children contribute to self-evaluation and decision making through questionnaires; as well as the School Council helping to lead the school, by consulting with the classes and feeding back. The Mission Statement says that the school does ‘not tolerate behaviour attitudes or ideas which fail to recognise that every one of us is created in the image and likeness of God’, and as a result of this, all children are valued. Every child has contributed to displays in the hall, with their picture and their ‘reaching out’ hands. In addition to this, each child’s class has a display of their saint in the hall. The school is very inclusive. The number of new entrants to the school is rising, many from international backgrounds and the school reaches out to these families to welcome them into the community of St Joseph’s.

THE QUALITY OF THE WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

The school feels that all staff and pupils demonstrate a high degree of care and respect for one another; living the Mission Statement. Older children are responsible for the younger ones, such as the Year 6 ‘Gardeners’ being responsible for the Reception children, called the ‘seeds.’ Children’s unique gifts are valued, including out of school achievements and musical talent. Pupil Chaplains play a part in the welfare of the school community by leading activities and acting as role models. They have a prayer room that they use to help lead the children in prayer. Children’s views are gathered, and they effect decision making in the school, for example changing school dinners, and choosing the design for a revamped playground. They speak eloquently about how they can support one another and how to repair friendships. The school responds powerfully to families in need and crisis, both within the St Joseph’s School community and on an international level. The SRE Policy states that ‘children are encouraged to marvel at the wonder and beauty of God’s creative love’, and have adopted the Bolton Catholic Schools scheme for this. The school uses its budget to support vulnerable children, such as Booster Groups and Nurture Groups. The PSHE Policy states that it aims for children “to have respect for others” and “to develop good relationships with other members of the community”; these were observed during the inspection. The policy also aims for children ‘to develop self-confidence and self-esteem’. This was seen in a particularly powerful example of collective worship in a Key Stage 2 class. The Mission Statement says that St Joseph’s has a ‘safe and secure environment where every individual is respected for who they are and what they believe’.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORSHIP IS GOOD

Children pray daily at the school, in classes, small groups, individually and as a whole school in assemblies. Children compose their own prayers and are encouraged to talk to God and to listen to Him. Each class has a prayer table and at the time of the inspection, all were coloured gold and purple to signify the beginning of Advent. In Key Stage 2, Masses are fortnightly celebrated alongside the parish, with children involved in the planning and celebration of the Masses. The chaplains run prayer clubs for other children at lunchtimes and the Year 5 children go on retreat each year. The school supports the parish in the sacramental programme. The Prayer and Worship Policy states that the school aims to 'provide children with opportunities to develop different kinds of prayer including formal, spontaneous, individual and group'. All of the children have their own prayer journals, which provide for them the opportunity to speak to God and these thoughts are readily shared with their classes and across the school. The school has a systematic approach to teaching the Rosary led capably by the chaplaincy team, with the strong support of the parish.

THE QUALITY OF THE WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

The Mission Statement is at the centre of everything that goes on in the school, resulting in all members of the school community promoting the Catholic culture. Governors, staff, children and parents all have roles to play in evaluating the Catholic life of the school and thus its next steps of development. The chaplaincy team drove the decision to have the prayer room. The parish priest is a regular visitor to school and he supports the children. The school taps into the resources of the other Catholic schools in the Bolton cluster. For example, another Bolton school joined St Joseph's in the whole school assembly, which added an extra focus for the children. Schools also share in-service training. The pupil chaplains play an active leadership role. The school reaches out by raising funds for CAFOD, McMillan Nurses, St Joseph's Penny and the British Heart Foundation. The Behaviour Policy is very clear when it states that 'we say no to bullying'. The children report that they know exactly what to do in the instance of bullying. The Mission Statement says that St Joseph's is committed to ensuring that through careful nurture and encouragement, all children are equipped 'to become the confident, able, happy and secure individuals they were made to be'. This was clearly seen during a lesson in KS2. The school is very inclusive. This was evident in the assembly when children greeted their peers from another school and worked with them. The children show high levels of respect and acceptance for the individuality of their friends, particularly in personalised prayer in upper Key Stage 2. The RE Policy states that the school aims 'to develop, in a Catholic atmosphere, qualities of mind, body and spirit in order to prepare our children to face the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life'. This was seen when in the care and nurture that was given to the children. Interviews with children demonstrate how central the Mission Statement is, in the lives of the children.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school by ensuring that all pupils are actively engaged in learning activities throughout the lesson.
- To ensure that all of the children's learning experiences are stimulating and exciting, leading to an enhanced level of engagement.

30th November 2015

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for your lovely welcome when we both came to inspect your school on behalf of the Bishop. We saw that you had lovely manners, and always helped us really well when we asked you questions.

Your headteacher works very hard to make the school better and better. She and her deputy know the things that need to improve at the school, and they are working hard with your teachers to make this happen. The governors are also helping to improve the school.

The staff really do care for you, and we have seen them do their best to make you feel welcome and happy in school.

The care that you show for everyone is fantastic. We were both really impressed with how much you looked after each other. We spoke to some of your parents, and they were really proud of you and your school.

Once again, thank you for making us both feel so welcome.

God bless all in your school,

Mr J Graves, Mr D Harrison

(Section 48 Inspectors)

Summary Report to Parents

On 30th November the school was inspected in accordance with section 48 of the education Act 2005. The full report has been made available to the school and can also be accessed via both the school website and the Education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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