

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 125205

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton

26–27 September 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

1

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

1

Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

1

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

Compliance statement

- St Joseph's is compliant with the general norms of the Bishops' Conference in relation to 10% curriculum time.
- St Joseph's implements the diocesan Bishop's requirements in relation to phased implementation of the *Religious Education Directory* and the RSE curriculum stipulation.
- St Joseph's have fully responded to the areas for improvement from the previous inspection.

What the school does well

- Leaders and governors continue to be highly ambitious in ensuring that St Joseph's meets the highest standards in all aspects of its Catholic ethos, teaching and prayer life. They are successful in their aims as evidenced by members of the extended school community who contributed their views during the inspection.
- Established traditions and practices enrich the Catholic curriculum and make a deep and inspiring impression on the hearts and minds of young learners and their families, staff and parishioners.
- Governors have recognised and rewarded the central role played by leaders of religious education and the impact that it has, in all its aspects, to positively influence the whole school ethos and curriculum.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They display good manners, recognising Jesus in themselves and others, fulfilling the school motto with sincerity: 'work hard, play well and make other people happy'.
- The school environment, inside and out, is a vibrant celebration of its Catholic identity and mission. Religious artefacts and displays, the prayer garden and the Way of the Cross proclaim that, in this school community, faith is alive, nurtured and growing.

What the school needs to improve

- Seek ways to share your excellent practice, particularly in creating rich experiences of prayer and liturgy, to have an impact on the practice of other schools within the deanery and, if possible, at diocesan level.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

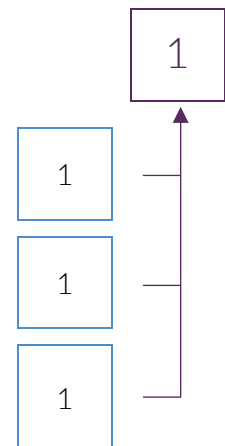
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



Pupils have a clear understanding that the school community is committed to following the teaching and example of Jesus as expressed in the Gospels. Discussing moral dilemmas or the possibility of bullying, pupils repeatedly state, 'It wouldn't happen here.' Pupils apply their learning confidently to everyday life to fulfil the principles of Catholic social teaching. Pupils cite examples including litter picking to care for the environment; house fundraising to serve those in need; and participating in the Golden Boot award to reduce pollution. Pupils show a deep respect for themselves and the dignity of others, all made in the image and likeness of God. Behaviour is exemplary in lessons and throughout the school. Pupils know how to resolve minor friendship issues through negotiation and compromise and making a 'fresh start'. Supported by the school community they develop a deep sense of respect for those of other faiths and cultures as they celebrate the vibrant diversity of their community through the inclusive cultural celebration days.

The mission statement is woven into the school hymn, sung at celebrations and liturgies with the result that everyone knows it and the impact on school life is tangible. In a community based on Catholic tradition and practice, this mission is rooted in the word of God brought joyfully to life. One of the many examples of the mission in action is the photographic display of pupils engaged in various activities. Each photograph links to a phrase of the mission statement to clearly illustrate and exemplify its meaning, such as playing together, praying together, caring for the environment, working hard and developing personal talents. There is a strong culture of welcome. The school community goes the extra mile to provide an exceptionally supportive and joyful environment for each of its members, valuing all without exception. Staff say, 'There is no divide; everyone looks out for each other.' In all relationships, staff consistently bear witness to

the school's Catholic life and mission. Consequently, pupils reflect the fair and calm approach modelled by their teachers. Parents recognise and value the contribution all staff make to their children's academic, emotional and spiritual development: the survey responses were overwhelmingly positive. 'The religious aspect of the school is central to the whole curriculum... which in turn means that (Gospel) values are fundamentally part of our lives and those of family, friends and our community.' The provision for relationships, sex, and health education is carefully planned to ensure that, as well as meeting all statutory requirements, it also fully meets diocesan requirements. The curriculum is rooted in the teaching of the Church and has been carefully cross-matched across all subjects to ensure complete coverage.

Leaders are very well supported by a committed and skilled group of governors who actively promote the Bishop's vision for the diocese. As a result of planned monitoring activities and a shared understanding and vision for excellence, governors are very well qualified to support and challenge the leadership team. An example is governors' detailed contribution to the school's self-evaluation document for this inspection. Key governors have driven initiatives such as engaging pupils in the consultation for the diocesan Synod response from the parish. Pupils reflected: 'Faith shows us the right way to behave towards other people in actions, words and feelings.' 'It makes me take the right turns in life.' The assistant priest is a school governor and visits regularly. The close relationship between the parish and school results in a flourishing and mutually beneficial partnership. Parents speak of the parish as an 'extension of the school family'. Parishioners speak of the 'joy and hope' that the pupils embody.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

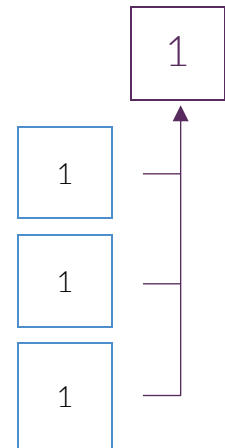
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Pupils enjoy their learning and are developing excellent knowledge, understanding and skills. The star system used for feedback means they know how well they are doing and how to improve. As a result of carefully adapted tasks, all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, experience success and appropriate challenge. Relative to their age and capacity, pupils are religiously literate. A Year 2 pupil was able to explain, 'A covenant is a kind of deal', whereas in Year 6, pupils talk about the 'Redemption Plan'. Godly play, modelled by the teacher, supports Early Years children to talk about what they know and understand, for example when reflecting on what is special to them: 'I see God in my family', 'I see God in the stars and the moon.' Pupils are very good at making links to prior learning thanks to the practice of 'interrupting forgetfulness'. In a Year 4 lesson about moral dilemmas, some pupils could make links to Scripture, with one referencing the Judgement of Solomon. Pupils are particularly skilled at applying their learning to everyday life, for example, able to explain reconciliation in terms of healing conflicts: 'I would talk about it, hug it out and make a fresh start.' Pupils' work is of a consistently high quality, demonstrating excellent presentation, individuality and creativity. Their 'special books' are cherished by parents and pupils alike: 'The special books that are used in RE have pictures of our family on them and bring together our faith and family journey.' Pupils enjoy choosing their best work for display on the 'Everything I do' celebration board and can explain why it is good.

Teachers have a high level of confidence based on strong subject knowledge and teaching expertise, appropriate to the phase in which they are teaching. Lighting, voice and suspense are used to create a sense of awe and wonder, particularly effective with the youngest pupils whose engagement in lessons is impeccable. Lessons begin with lighting a candle and Early Years children already know this is because 'Jesus is the light of the world.' Pupils make the sign of the

cross, followed by a prayer or short meditation, setting the atmosphere and expectations for the lesson which is 'an offering to God.' Teachers use questioning skilfully to encourage precision in pupils' answers thus maximising learning opportunities.

Leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Directory* through participation in diocesan training together with regular monitoring activities. A key feature of all lessons is the clarity of the learning objective and success criteria, sufficiently focused to allow for completion within the time available. This is one aspect of the carefully planned techniques which combine to ensure accessible and enjoyable learning experiences throughout the school, with extension provided by the 'purple challenge'. Leaders and governors ensure that religious education has at least full parity with other core curriculum subjects. All governors are united in elevating the status of the subject leaders' role in recognition that religious education is the 'core of the core' from which the success of all other aspects of school life flows. The impact is powerful: 'The leadership in Catholic life and mission, religious education and prayer is amazing... If I have a question or query about anything in RE, ...I am made to feel that my question is valuable, and I am promptly given a supportive answer or guidance.' Leaders and governors are thorough in their self-evaluation of religious education, seeking to support and challenge whilst acknowledging that a sign of a successful school is that there are few areas for improvement.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1

1

Pupils demonstrate a detailed understanding of the rich tradition of Catholic prayer developed from their first days in Early Years where they begin to learn the traditional prayers of the Church, through to the practice of Visio Divina, meditation and silent prayer. As they progress through the school, pupils often say that prayer brings them closer to God. Praying through singing is a particular strength. Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of the shape and meaning of the Church's liturgical year and how it is expressed in the prayer life of the school. Even the youngest pupils are learning to recognise the liturgical colours as they prepare the prayer focus and can identify, for example, that green symbolises Ordinary Time, a time for growth. Pupils work collaboratively with their teachers, leaders and each other to prepare creative and meaningful experiences of prayer and liturgy. They plan and lead liturgies with increasing confidence, understanding and skill, for example devising prayer litanies, performing liturgical dance and forming personal prayers. Pupils are regularly invited to evaluate the quality of the prayer and liturgy they have experienced or planned and can identify improvements. The school has responded promptly to requests for 'more dancing!', 'role play' and 'a few minutes' silence to pray to God for our own needs'. Pupils go forth into the 'Holy Hallway', where they may respond to the weekly challenge, for example about prayer preferences, which teachers promptly incorporate into practice.

There are so many opportunities to pray at St Joseph's: in the prayer garden, the Way of the Cross, meditating on the rosary and Visio Divina are just some of the voluntary opportunities available. The school hall was transformed into a sacred space for the whole school liturgy during the inspection, a powerful and inspirational experience and model of best practice for other prayer leaders. In response to the invitation to personal prayer, pupils and staff spoke simultaneously the names of those they wished to pray for. Similarly, longer prayers of petition

and thanks were offered simultaneously, a device which encouraged and facilitated the sharing of personal prayer. Staff make imaginative and creative use of the spaces available for prayer in the school and out in the grounds. Pupils can identify the religious artefacts on display. Proximity to the church facilitates school/parish Masses and supports the relationship between home, school and parish. Parent surveys reveal the impact of the school's prayer life on the home and family: 'We are lucky to have so many opportunities to attend church and Mass with the welcome at the start of the year, goodbye at the end and all the key celebrations in between'; 'Prayer is incorporated fully into the children's lives.' The annual portrayal of the Passion is praised by members of the community as a deeply spiritual experience: 'Our family has had the opportunity to participate in events such as the Way of the Cross, religious plays and school Masses. These experiences have strengthened our own faith and fostered a sense of community within the school.'

Leaders, including governors, have planned the school calendar and timetable carefully to ensure the celebration of Mass at key times in the liturgical year and at significant moments within the life of the school. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered during Lent and Advent. Provision for prayer and liturgy is prioritised when setting budgets and allocating resources. Religious education leaders have produced a detailed handbook on prayer and liturgy as a resource for staff, together with a comprehensive annual plan of provision. As a result, all staff feel hugely supported in developing consistently high-quality experiences of prayer and liturgy. In turn, meaningful and wholly pupil-led liturgies are well established.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	125205
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9363423
Full postal address of the school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Rosebank, West Street, Epsom, KT18 7RT
School phone number	01372727850
Headteacher	Theresa Kenefick
Chair of Governors	Christopher Donovan
School Website	http://www.stjosephs-epsom.surrey.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Hilary Blake, Lead inspector

Michael Lobo, Team inspector

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement