



Diocese of Westminster

INSPECTION REPORT

Our Lady and St Joseph Catholic Primary School

Buckingham Road, Hackney, N1 4DG

Telephone: 020 7254 7353

e-mail address: SFlood@olsj.hackney.sch.uk

DfES Number: 204/3371

Headteacher: Mr. Sean Flood

Chair of Governors: Ms Phillippa Toomey

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 14th May 2008
Date of previous inspection: December 6th 2004

Reporting Inspector: Mrs. Tina Cleugh

Description of School

Our Lady and St Joseph Primary School is a one form entry school in the London Borough of Hackney. It is one of the oldest schools in the Diocese of Westminster, serving the people of Hackney and Kingsland parishes for 150 years. The school serves the parishes of Our Lady and St Joseph Church and a minority of pupils come from the parishes of St. John the Baptist, Hackney and Our Lady of Good Counsel, Stoke Newington. The school is very popular, over subscribed and is located in an area of great social deprivation. It experiences demographic change including social regeneration of housing. The parish of Our Lady and St Joseph is ethnically diverse, housing the Nigerian Chaplaincy for London, serving a large Afro-Caribbean population. The school reflects the ethnic make up of the community, with over 35 nationalities represented. The school is greatly valued by its local Catholic community. There are 225 children on roll of whom 58% have English as an additional language, 25% are eligible for free school meals, 21% have identified special educational needs with 7 pupils having a statement of special needs, which are indicators of the poverty and deprivation. There are 12.4 full time equivalent teachers, of whom 74% are Catholic with 62.5% teachers holding the Catholic certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS) or equivalent. The school experiences fluctuations in ability across different cohorts. The school gives 22.5 hours of non-teaching support weekly. The school mission statement is woven into the very fabric of all aspects of life in this school where, "Our Mission is to foster the Gospel values of Jesus Christ and provide a high standard of education with equality of opportunity for all."

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

This is an excellent school with many outstanding features, dedicated to living out its mission and ethos. The parental questionnaires were evidence of how much the parents appreciate and value the school, including the group of parents who met with the inspector. There were 54 responses all of which agreed or highly agreed in all categories stating how much they appreciate, acknowledge and celebrate all that the school does. The very high quality of spiritual guidance and the rich diet of celebrations throughout the liturgical year were evident during the inspection; with the outstanding assembly, the centrality of prayer across the school from the youngest nursery and reception celebration of Pentecost, to the stillness and reflection created in an upper Key Stage Two circle prayer. The quality of relationships with and between all staff, the children and the parents is one of a living partnership which enhances the triple partnership of home, school and parish. The school is fully inclusive, with provision for children identified with special educational needs a real strength of the school. The beautiful grounds, so well kept and nurtured by the committed Premises Manager, the Prayer Garden and Grotto, dedicated to Our Lady, forms a real oasis of calm and security in the centre of this very busy urban area. The children who met with the inspector were eager to describe their school as "a very happy and thriving school, where we really like our teachers and they make our lessons fun. "

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

The religious education co-ordinator has worked in partnership with the headteacher to ensure all aspects and issues from the previous inspection have been included in the on-going improvement plans. The school has six teachers trained as mentors, with the headteacher an

experienced and accredited mentor for school leaders. The school is a training school for three partner providers. They have developed a robust and thorough induction programme for new staff. The leadership from the deputy headteacher and headteacher, who fully support the co-ordinator, ensures all teachers are well supported. The school has identified its on-going plans to have all teachers trained as mentors for NQT and GTP colleagues, and to continue its in-house peer group mentoring to support each other. The school has identified its area for action to continue training for mentoring to help those teachers who are in their second and third year of teaching.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The inspector concurs with the school's self-evaluation that indeed there is outstanding capacity for this school to continue to improve and develop. The commitment of the whole school community to excellence and their determination to be the best that they can be is evident in the views of the children, the parents, the governors and the staff who readily shared their pride in their school with the inspector. The religious education co-ordinator is fully aware of the areas prioritised for continued improvement and has the full and pro-active support of the deputy headteacher and the headteacher. Their dedication to the on-going development of the Catholic Life and religious education is foremost in their priorities for continued school improvement. The headteacher ensures the co-ordinator is released to attend all relevant in-service, networking and other Diocesan programmes, which she readily includes within the school improvement process. The excellent relationships at every level within the triple partnership of home, school and parish, are evident through the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, ably supported in partnership by his religious education co-ordinator and his senior management team. The very pro-active governing body, many of whom are daily and weekly participants in general school life in many ways, enhances this most successful partnership.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to develop links with other faith communities by widening the activities to other year groups
- Continue assessment moderation in line with standards and challenges in core areas which move children on in their learning
- Further embed key stage moderation, levelling attainment in religious education, in line with exemplifications, through whole school assessment for learning opportunities

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The leadership team, ably led by the Headteacher is fully supported by the religious education co-ordinator, who has a full grasp of how the school will continue to move forward. They ensure that all aspects of the school improvement plan, especially the areas for the Catholic life of the school, are included in termly action plans and ongoing evaluations. They ensure clear direction is evident, that all members of the school community understand their role in enhancing the Catholic life at the different levels and through a range of opportunities. The co-ordinator has the respect and admiration of her colleagues on the leadership and management

team and is a clear role model for less experienced colleagues. She liaises with the diocesan advisor to ensure the school is abreast of all local and national innovations, including opportunities to enhance the delivery of religious education and the development of the spiritual and prayer life of the school. She is well supported by the headteacher, who is proactively involved in the liturgical and collective worship opportunities. She works in partnership with the headteacher in all aspects of monitoring to ensure effective provision is in place, for example providing opportunities for developing creativity and collating attractive and informative records for each year group. The governing body supports the management team and the parish priest is a regular and active part of the team. He describes the school as "what a Catholic community should be, with a common and shared vision". He describes the headteacher as, "a person of great vision, who ensures religion is not just 'tacked on' but fully integrated developing remarkable levels of religious literacy". The governors explained how they are kept fully informed at all levels, cooperating well together and how they are fully active in all aspects of the school.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

This area of school life is celebrated through a rich range of personal, small group and whole school liturgies, reflective prayer groups, weekly Masses, sacramental celebrations, and ongoing regular assemblies. The children witness devotion and reverence. They are encouraged, from the youngest Nursery children to the older more mature Year Six children, to develop their own sense of wonder and awe. The collective worship witnessed during the inspection was outstanding. The headteacher guided the children through the importance of the Holy Spirit in our lives and how we celebrate Pentecost with effective use of ICT portraying the wonderful Turvey Abbey icons of Pentecost and the effect of the Holy Spirit on the lives of the disciples after the Ascension of Jesus. The children were all participating in signing the lyrics whilst singing with joy and confidence. The power of the Spirit in their lives was woven into the story on the Feast of St. Matthias and how the power of the spirit can transform our lives and bring "light" to our suffering world. The stillness for prayer, remembering the plight of people in Burma, the Mizzen family and their readiness to forgive, reminded the children of how much they belong in God's family. The children are clearly familiar with a range of liturgical hymns, using their mother tongue in parts of their participation and praying spontaneously. ICT was used appropriately to enhance the teaching and its impact on learning in many of the lessons observed. The wonderful celebration of Pentecost by the Early Years children, blowing their bubbles to their dance using their "flames" strips, singing "Alleluia" to God, set the standard including the excellent circle prayer in upper Key Stage Two, with their celebration of the birthday of the Church. The school reaches out to the community, with many staff acting as Catechists, sharing in the First Holy Communion preparations. The self-evaluation declares prayer and collective worship as "a major strength of the school". The inspector fully agrees with this. Children are clearly given many opportunities to learn traditional prayers. The record books in each year group with photographic and other evidence enables a clear trail through the school year. Prayer is indeed woven into the everyday fabric and facet of school life. The very rich resource of their Prayer Garden, described by the Bishop as a "haven of peace and tranquillity", is lovingly cared for by their very dedicated and committed Premises Manager, who readily gives his time to all aspects of school life. Prayer is also said in other languages enabling children to feel at home and also through Spanish which the whole school is developing. The school's identified action to improve the Makaton signing when praying and singing hymns with the younger children, is clearly having an affect. The moral and spiritual development is supported through the planned delivery of SEAL and PSHCE programmes which are well integrated into the religious curriculum and especially developed through circle prayer.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school / college promote community cohesion?

This is an outstanding area in the day to day and termly life of this school. Their commitment to this is such that they have identified it as among the targets in Performance Management for all staff. The school has many international links, fundraising for schools abroad, developing these links through the International School Award and its full commitment to growing and sustaining links with the local community Mosque and Synagogue. The children celebrate their rich diversity in many ways including daily welcomes at registration, praying in different languages, using Makaton sign language, from the youngest nursery children to its confident use in Year Six. The makeup of the Governing Body reflects the ethnic diversity of the school. The headteacher as a representative for the NAHT in Hackney, supports 55 other headteachers, mentoring several state school heads in the borough and is currently supporting leadership in another borough during the head's illness. The religious education co-ordinator has been identified as a lead teacher for the Foundation Stage and the Deputy Headteacher supports SEN work throughout Hackney. The children are encouraged to fund raise for a variety of local, diocesan and national and global charities and their parents are most generous in supporting these initiatives, such as CAFOD, Human Development Foundation in SE Asia, Good Shepherd Diocesan programmes. The religious education curriculum is structured to enhance the sense of children belonging to a wider global community, learning about schools around the world. Their developed website, with its high quality interactive and extensive school links also inform parents and the wider community about the work of the school. Updates on the website include celebrating all aspects of school developments, recent local visits, their range of field trips, and how the school council is a pro-active voice in school improvement priorities. The children successfully prepared a power-point presentation to the parents for funding to improve the "five a day" commitment to their Healthy Schools Award and status. The School Council has also presented their plans, which are now accepted, for improving the outside area of the Early Years for the reception children. The school council members who met with the inspector were very articulate, confident and extremely proud of their active participation in school life, especially acting as monitors, friends to lonely children and their general range of responsibilities. They stated how it is this which keeps their school safe and secure as a happy place to be for all. The school is fully inclusive especially in being accessible, implementing the Disability Equality requirements. The parish is the home of the Nigerian Chaplaincy in London and the parish also nurtures extensive links with the local Vietnamese population also. Some members of staff are involved in a London Challenge partnership with the neighbouring state school. The school has also identified through its excellent self-evaluation processes how it intends to continue developing and sustaining links within the local community and beyond, for its future action plans.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

The leadership and management team have effectively monitored and evaluated standards and achievements in religious education. The inspector agrees with their findings that overall achievement and standards are good. The combination of discussion with pupils, scrutiny of work in the books, in the year group record book and in the class assessment book, indicate how well the school is addressing this key area of development. Observation of learning during

teaching observations demonstrates that achievement is good overall. The school has begun its analysis of attainment assessment data in religious education, in line with other diocesan schools. They have effectively identified this as an area of ongoing development and action for further school improvement priorities, particularly benchmarking levels of attainment in RE with those in English; developing a range of learning styles into planning to allow more personalised learning, which will, as they have identified, further develop engagement in the delivery of the religious education curriculum. The school correctly recognises this as an innovative opportunity for continued development. The religious education co-ordinator has effectively identified the next stage as developing confidence for all teachers in moderation of attainment, which reflects the challenges planned for other core subject areas.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The classrooms and outside teaching areas are lively, with vibrant displays, which reflect the participation of the children. The public areas also celebrate the range of curriculum delivery and the efforts of the children. The quality of teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding with a high level of good or better teaching. Where the lessons were outstanding, the pace was lively, children were challenged and encouraged to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and religious literacy, including highly skilled use of ICT. Learners are well engaged in the learning across all year groups. Significant support for children identified with SEN or with a statement of SEN, is evident, including how they are guided by their designated Teaching Assistant. The inspector agrees with the self-evaluation that the quality and range of teaching assistants within the school, including the HLTA's, is very good. Observations of teaching during the inspection identified these teaching assistants being well planned and involved in the teaching to impact on good inclusion for these children. The behaviour in classes, in and around the school, is good. The children are encouraged to respond and participate. The teachers and teaching assistants observed during the inspection demonstrated good subject knowledge and commitment to teaching Catholic belief, and in most cases they are challenging the children to think spiritually and ethically. The spiritual, moral, personal, social and cultural development of the children is recognised and supported. Learners are confident to ask questions, teachers experience high respect from their pupils and relate well to them. The school involves parents and carers well in their children's learning, through regular meetings, information and open door policy, evidenced by the parental responses to the questionnaires. The school has effectively recognised through their monitoring process that the good teaching and its impact on learning, especially target setting through assessment for learning opportunities in religious education, continues to be an area for ongoing improvement and development.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The quality of the religious education curriculum, delivered through the diocesan recommended scheme, 'Here I Am', fully meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. The religious education timetable meets the diocesan guideline for 10% of curriculum time. The monitoring schedule, including headteacher and co-ordinator observations and scrutiny of work in books, supports the planned curriculum to match learner's hopes and potential, building on prior attainment and experience. The school has generously invested in suitable and high quality resources, particularly for the delivery of other faiths, and appropriate ICT software to contribute to the very high quality prayer life and collective worship opportunities. The school has made great progress in incorporating ICT, appropriate field trips, visits to places of worship,

including a local Mosque and Synagogue for older junior children, into their planned programme. They have identified the need to further develop this with the younger children as appropriate. They are planning opportunities for creative learning which was evident in the class record books with a range of photographic evidence of how the 'Here I Am' topics have been developed during the year. There are planned opportunities for cross-curricular links to enhance levels of understanding, within their local and more global experiences. This area has been identified for continued development, especially with the younger children. The school recognises the value of continued opportunities for moral development, through incorporating the SEAL and PSHCE links, (co-ordinated by the deputy headteacher in partnership with the RE Co-ordinator), into the curriculum. This supports the behaviour and responsible attitudes of the children, who indeed are great ambassadors for their school. The school welcomes its diversity and seeks opportunities to celebrate and reflect the cultural backgrounds of the children in their lessons. Opportunities such as Black History Month are planned for and used well, including other global links. The school plans opportunities through class assemblies which have links to the curriculum being followed. Feast Days and liturgical events are woven into the curriculum planning.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The religious education co-ordinator works in close partnership with the headteacher and together they set clear direction leading to improvement and promoting high quality religious education for all the children. The governing body is extremely well informed regarding all matter relating to the Catholic life of the school. The parish priest is a regular visitor and an eager participant in all aspects of the school life. In partnership with the governing body the leadership and senior management team work tirelessly to ensure excellent provision is in place for this outstanding Catholic school. They have a very strong sense of the part they play in the mission of the Church. They ensure that religious education is given its due status, explore ways to include creativity and opportunities for cross-curricular links, including national and international links with Catholic schools and communities abroad. The co-ordinator sets an excellent example, modelling teaching to new colleagues, attending regular diocesan and borough inset, ensuring the headteacher is kept fully informed of all innovations and initiatives. The school has a robust self-evaluation process, including all aspects of religious education and its Catholic life. These are shared amongst colleagues, governors, parents and children. The whole school ownership is evident and a strength of the school. Through this process the co-ordinator has identified the areas for continued improvement and development, which she has incorporated into the school development plan. The school has excellent induction processes for new and inexperienced staff to support their ownership in delivering effective mechanisms for all staff to meet the needs of all learners, with confidence and through a rich learning environment. The senior team includes experienced staff members, recognised as Lead Teachers by Hackney Learning Trust. The RE co-ordinator has been requested by the diocese to mentor other new RE Co-ordinators in the area. Members of staff at all levels are encouraged to continuing professional development, in all areas including the Catholic faith and religious education. The school is a place where faith and learning are interwoven throughout.

Grade 1