



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: Grays Convent High School

Unique Reference Number: 115239

Inspection Date: 25 June 2013

**Reporting Inspectors: Dr Michael Sutherland-Harper and
Monsignor George Stokes**

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

**Type of School: Secondary
School Category: Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils: 11-16
Gender of pupils: Female
Number on roll: 586
Appropriate Authority: Thurrock
Date of previous inspection: 27 June 2008**

**School Address: College Avenue
Grays, Essex
RM17 5UX
Tel. No. 01375 376173
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Chair of Governors: Mr John Sutton
Headteacher: Miss Anne-Marie Brister**

Introduction:

The Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education (Schools) Act 2005 by two inspectors appointed by the Diocesan Bishop at the request of the Governing Body of the School.

The Inspectors acknowledge and are appreciative of the full support, co-operation and courtesy they enjoyed from the Governors, Headteacher, Staff and Pupils of the School both before and during the Inspection. The Inspectors wish to express their gratitude to all concerned.

The focus of the Section 48 Inspection was:

- Classroom Religious Education
- The Catholic nature of the School through:
 1. Worship
 2. Links with the Catholic and wider community
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development

The Section 48 Report

Grays Convent High School
College Avenue
Grays, Essex
RM17 5UX

Head Teacher: Miss Anne-Marie Brister

Date of Inspection: 25 June 2013

Description of the School:

Grays Convent High School is an 11-16 Voluntary Aided Catholic girls' comprehensive school serving the Catholic parishes of Grays, Tilbury, Stanford le Hope and South Ockenden in the diocese of Brentwood. The La Sainte Union (LSU) religious congregation are trustees of the school, which has occupied its present site for over a hundred years..

Record of Evidence Base:

Two Diocesan Inspectors were in the school for the equivalent of two inspection days.

- The study of pre-inspection documentation including the Self-Evaluation Form/ Denominational Provision (SEF/DP).
- The observation of eight lessons.
- Participation in an assembly.
- Scrutiny of pupils' written work.
- Meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the head of Religious Education (R.E.), the school chaplain, governors and the school council.
- Observations of R.E. displays in the classrooms and around the school.

What the School does well:

Grays Convent High School is a good school with a number of outstanding features, in particular outstanding GCSE results in Religious Education, excellent pastoral care and the school's strong commitment to charity work. It lives out its mission statement as a school where 'we can grow in Christ through our relationships with each other' and 'strives to be an accepting and caring community which centres its work on the values of the Gospel'. The school recognises the value of each person and promotes the equality and dignity of the individual, beginning with the clear expectations set by the headteacher that each girl will flourish and develop during her time in the school. She is well supported by the deputy head and head of department who have worked effectively with her to develop the school and overseen the improvements which have taken place. The school has thoroughly and accurately evaluated its work and what remains to be done in its self-evaluation document.

Students achieve outstanding results in public examinations in Religious Education (R.E.) and those standards look set to be maintained for the current Year 11 cohort. Attainment is at least good for all groups lower down the school and often better. Teachers make good use of a wide range of resources, including electronic technologies, and regularly review the ways in which learning might be enhanced, especially for those pupils who arrive from non-Catholic primary schools with little or no knowledge of Catholic beliefs and practices. Revision lessons and sessions on exam technique help to prepare pupils well for GCSE examinations.

Outcomes in R.E. are outstanding by the time pupils leave the school and increasingly so lower down the school. The chaplain has worked diligently to provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities to develop their understanding in smaller groups such as the art, Rosary, and prayer and praise groups. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding across the school as a result of the clear expectations that they will help each other to learn and thrive. Pupils serve their community as prefects and Year 7 buddies and have good access to retreats and away days with a spiritual theme. Charity events have raised significant amounts of money for local and national causes. Pupils have a well-developed

understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness as evidenced by good displays around the school and in the foyer, which change at regular intervals. The school has identified the need to develop pupils' voice in evaluating the Catholic life of the school and further work to help pupils understand the role and importance of parish links with the school. As a result of the effective preparation they have received, pupils look set to take an even greater role in planning and delivering activities outside of the school. Relationships with parents and carers and with the local community are good and developing further.

Opportunities for collective worship are well developed and carefully supported by the dedicated work of the local parish priest and the care with which the chaplain approaches her work. All pupils are able to participate in planning and leading acts of worship, especially in classes and year groups, such as the Masses or Reconciliation services which every R.E. class prepares. The school makes careful arrangements to support the needs of pupils arriving from a different faith background. It also recognises that much of the leadership of collective worship still comes from adults, as was the case in an assembly observed during the inspection. Pupils have a good number of moments for reflection in the course of R.E. lessons but formal prayer in lessons is a little less frequent than those opportunities for reflection.

Leaders, managers and governors do a very good job in developing the Catholic life of the school. The experienced headteacher knows her school well and has carefully guided it forward. Governors are committed to promoting the church's mission in education and to further marketing of the school with the aim of attracting more local Catholics. Governors' support is typified by the well-constructed philosophy of education document provided for inspectors by one of the La Sainte Union governors during the inspection. Outcomes are carefully monitored by the headteacher and her senior team, the head of department and governors. The pupils are well aware of the values and ethos for which the school stands. Careful monitoring of results and progress has led to an ongoing improvement in results over time.

Teaching in R.E., as evidenced by results and observations during the inspection, is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. All teachers are subject specialists who make effective use of questioning to promote learning. Staff regularly attend training offered by the diocese and other providers. The curriculum meets the requirements set out by the diocese and by the Bishops' Conference. Pupils enjoy R.E. because teachers guide them carefully and use a range of approaches. The match of work to ability in lessons is by broad general groupings. In lessons observed during the inspection, teachers often provided good opportunities for pupils to take a lead but whereas in some lessons this was carried forward by pupils independently, in others they were more ready for teachers to guide the direction their thinking took. Work is regularly marked and neatly presented. Teachers' comments are added to point pupils towards the next steps in their learning but the extent to which pupils respond to those comments varies between classes.

In its own opinion, the school is very effective. It cites as particular strengths its commitment to social justice, high attainment in public and school examinations in R.E,

an ethos which is supportive of each member of the school, high standards of behaviour and its emphasis on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors agree with this assessment and feel that Grays Convent High School is steadily improving as it prepares to take a leading role in the local area and beyond, which builds on its deep commitment to excellent pastoral care and charity work.

What needs to be improved?

- **Ensure that all pupils respond to the feedback given on their work by teachers so that progress rates become even faster**
- **Refine the match of work to ability in lessons and lesson planning and include further opportunities for pupils to take the lead in their learning**
- **Give pupils a greater say in leading whole school assemblies and events which help to publicise the school**
- **Continue with the work under way to publicise the many strengths of the school and attract more local Catholic families.**

The Inspectors endorse the areas identified by the school for improvement in the Section 48 Self-Evaluation Form.