



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: St Helen's Catholic Junior School Academy

Local Authority: Essex

Unique Reference Number: 136977

Inspection Date: 15th July 2013

Reporting Inspectors: Derek Kelly
Maureen Perry

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

Type of School: Junior
School Category: Academy
Age range of pupils: 7 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 344
Appropriate Authority: Governing Body
Date of previous Inspection: 18th May 2009

School address:
Sawyers Hall Lane
Brentwood
Essex CM15 9BX

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Email: admin@st-helens-jun.essex.sch.uk
Chair of Governors: Bernard Tucker
Headteacher: Bozena Laraway

Introduction:

The Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education (Schools) Act 2005 by 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 throughout the inspection process. The inspectors wish to express their gratitude to all concerned.

The focus of the Section 48 Inspection was:

- Religious Education
- Catholic life of the school
- Collective Worship

The Section 48 Report

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Address of school **Sawyers Hall Lane**
 Brentwood
 Essex CM15 9BX

Headteacher: **Bozena Laraway**

Date of Inspection: **15th July 2013**

Description of the School:

St Helen's Catholic Junior School Academy is an academy status Catholic school situated in the County of Essex and in the Diocese of Brentwood. It is a larger than average junior school. It admits pupils aged 7 to 11 years, most pupils are baptised Catholics with the remainder from other Christian denominations and other faith groups. The school serves the Catholic community of Brentwood, Doddington, Ingatestone and Ongar. The school has gained a number of awards including Healthy Schools' accreditation and Investors in People status.

Record of Evidence Base:

- The study of pre-inspection documentation including the Self-Evaluation Form/Denominational Provision (SEF/DP).
- The observation of 9 lessons.
- Scrutiny of pupils' written work.
- Examination of school documents.
- Participation in a whole school assembly.
- Discussions with the headteacher, the Religious Education Co-ordinator, Chair of Governors, the Parish Priest, parents and pupils from the School Council and Eco Club.
- Observations of R.E. Displays in the classrooms and around the school.

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

Overall Effectiveness

St Helen's Catholic Junior School Academy is an outstanding Catholic school.

- The dynamic headteacher has an exceptionally clear vision for the future, leads strongly by example and is extremely well supported by the Religious Education Co-ordinator who is also the Assistant Headteacher, governors and all the staff.
- The school ensures that the Gospel values underpin everything the school seeks to achieve. The school's Mission Statement states 'St Helen's is a happy, caring school where we love and follow Jesus,' which is highly evident in the day to day life of pupils and staff.
- Teaching is consistently good and some is outstanding. Lessons are well planned and pupils enjoy learning.
- Pupils' progress is good and attainment is generally above average by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Pupils learning benefits significantly from a wide range of experiences and activities that strongly promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- As they move through the school pupils develop a keen sense of responsibility, care for others and spiritual and liturgical literacy.
- Pupils benefit greatly from Collective Worship opportunities which are a central aspect of the daily life of the school. Pupils learn how to plan, participate, lead prayer and enjoy worship.
- During acts of worship pupils demonstrate authentic responses which are reflected in their excellent behaviour and attitude to wider school life.
- Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and behaviour is outstanding.
- The school leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education and have an excellent understanding of where the school needs to go to improve further.

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

Pupils make good gains in their achievement in Religious Education as they move through the school and learn well. From entering the school with skills and knowledge which is at the expected level for their age, pupils' attainment is generally above average and improving by the end of Year 6 in knowledge and understanding of religion. Although the achievement of the most able pupils is good, further challenging of those pupils will help them to make even greater progress. Staff are not complacent in relation to raising standards and are currently focusing on raising levels of attainment further and ensuring that pupils make more rapid progress by introducing the 'Come and See' Religious Education Programme in the Autumn Term 2013. Most groups of pupils make good progress in Religious Education, including those who have special educational needs because they receive extra help. Additional guidance and support in small group sessions is carefully planned to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of religion. Teaching assistants are good at providing clear explanations to ensure that all pupils are confident and get the best from every lesson. For example, in a Year 3 lesson on Special Places, pupils applied themselves well and made good progress in identifying special places which they described. The activities were matched to pupils' needs because the teacher and teaching assistants were able to accurately assess the level of support required and adapt it as necessary. This enabled pupils to remain independent, motivated and on task.

The pupils willingly undertake a number of responsible roles, such as Head Girl and Head Boy, Prefects, House Captains and representatives of the School Council and Eco Club. The discussion with pupils from the School Council and Eco Club revealed an articulate group of pupils with clear ideas about how they help the school and how the school supports them. The School Council is proud of its achievements in raising money for a variety of causes, such as organising events for Children in Need and being involved in designing a Peace Garden. They are eager to take a more significant lead in contributing to the common good in the school and the wider community. It is evident that pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and enjoy excellent relationships with each other and with adults.

Contributions to the wider community include; the significant involvement of the school orchestra which regularly enhances worship at Sunday Mass at Brentwood Cathedral; the accomplished school choir sings at the diocesan carol concert, which also raised funds for the Brentwood Catholic Children's Society and other fund raising events for charities, such as; CAFOD, Children in Need and Children in Sudan. Links with the Cathedral of St Mary and St Helen Parish are extremely strong.

The extremely well prepared assemblies enable pupils to actively participate and involve pupils in composing prayers and leading worship confidently. This provides opportunities for prayerful reflection which pupils reverently accept. Pupils are keen to join in community prayers. Music is a liturgical strength of the school, as observed at the Awards Assembly attended by inspectors and a vast number of appreciative parents, with pupils from the choir and orchestra using their musical abilities exceptionally well to enhance Collective Worship.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

Leaders, governors and managers very effectively promote the Catholic life of the school, both within the school and outside. Links with parents and carers are exceptionally strong, particularly through the work of the Parents' Association, which actively builds community through the various events it organises throughout the year. The headteacher has strongly led by example and set a very clear vision of the high quality school she wishes St Helen's Catholic Junior School Academy to be. Staff relationships are excellent and staff are supportive of each other. Leaders and governors conduct a range of systematic monitoring activities relating to provision and outcomes for pupils; which informs targeted planning for action to improve outcomes for pupils in Religious Education.

The R.E. Co-ordinator has well thought-out plans to develop the subject. Monitoring and evaluation of the extensive tracking data has identified the need to develop the content of the curriculum. This has resulted in the forthcoming introduction of the Come and See Religious Education Programme to enhance curriculum planning and extend challenge in lessons. Additionally, leaders are striving to raise standards of achievement and plan to implement a structure that extends existing opportunities for pupils to respond to what they are learning through self-evaluation using given success criteria, in order to identify what they need to do next to achieve higher levels of attainment and make more rapid progress.

PROVISION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Overall, the majority of teaching in R.E. is good and some is outstanding. The proportion of outstanding teaching is not high enough to ensure that all pupils make rapid progress. Lessons are well planned and opportunities are frequently provided for pupils to work in pairs to strengthen their social skills and promote collaboration. In the best lessons there are clear learning objectives and a very good range of teaching strategies are used, so that lessons are lively and pupils are fully engaged. For example, in a lesson on Hinduism a world religion which is studied as part of the Here I Am R.E. Programme, talk partners and drama were used to very good effect, as was Information and Communication Technology (ICT) through the use of PowerPoint presentations, picture prompts and appropriate questioning. This made the lesson interesting and encouraged pupil participation through discussion, whilst also reinforcing and extending their religious vocabulary. It is evident that there are very good links between the R.E. curriculum and the liturgical life of the school, as exemplified in an observed Year 3 lesson which effectively developed pupils' understanding of special places for Jesus and how these are recalled at significant feasts in the Church's year, such as Bethlehem at Christmas and Jerusalem at Easter.

Teachers check the progress pupils make and use the information to set work which is largely at the right level of difficulty for pupils' abilities. However, teachers do not always set the most able pupils more challenging work to do, particularly when working without direct teacher support.

All exercise books are regularly marked. The best examples contain both praise and detailed guidance on the way to take work forward. The school is working to enhance its rigorous assessment and formative marking procedures, so that all pupils

understand the next steps in their learning and can reach the highest levels in R.E. and make rapid progress.

Religious Education is central to the mission of the school. The R.E. curriculum is based at present on the Here I Am Religious Education Programme, recommended by the Bishop of the Diocese, which is fully implemented. The school meets both the national and diocesan requirements for the allocation of curriculum time for taught Religious Education. The R.E. curriculum is generally customised to meet the needs of most pupils; however it does not yet fully ensure that the most able are challenged. The school is introducing the Come and See Religious Education Programme, also recommended by the Bishop, in the Autumn Term 2013 which should address these curriculum issues. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) complements the R.E. curriculum, whilst provision for Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) is comprehensive and the school has implemented the Diocesan Sex Education programme, 'Journey in Love.'

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is an impressive strength of the school. A calm, reflective atmosphere can be felt from the moment a visitor enters the school. Relationships throughout the community are excellent as exemplified by the way older pupils look after younger ones. There are exceptionally strong local and parish links, in addition to a well-developed connection with Donglin Primary School in Wuxi, China which serves to enrich both school communities.

Provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school is excellent because pupils have a reverent approach to their faith and show respect for other faiths. Collective worship is very well planned to reflect community celebrations, significant events and the liturgical year.

Relationships in the school are highly positive and pupils are extremely courteous, respectful and friendly towards adults and each other. Overall, the behaviour of pupils is excellent because they follow the example set by adults and other pupils, which promotes Gospel values, through positively reinforcing consideration and respect for others.

High quality R.E. displays in the classrooms and around the school celebrate pupils' achievement, supports learning and enhances opportunities for prayer and reflection. Each classroom has an appropriate focal point for prayer highlighting the school's Mission Statement. The current Here I Am R.E. Programme topic is prominent on display boards with relevant reference information and vocabulary, which is well used to support independent learning and personal reflection.

What the school needs to do to improve further:

- Increase the level of challenge in the tasks set for the most able pupils, in order to more closely match their abilities.
- Develop the use of rigorous assessment and formative marking procedures to further raise pupil achievement.
- Fully implement the Come and See Religious Education Programme 2013/2014

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

	Grade
Overall effectiveness – How effective the school is in providing Catholic education	1
How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups	2
How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and Religious Education and plan and implement improvements to outcomes for pupils	1
How effective provision is for Catholic education	1

Grading Key:

Grade 1: Outstanding

Grade 2: Good

Grade 3: Requires improvement

Grade 4: Inadequate