



## **DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD**

### **Inspection Report**



**Name of School: Sacred Heart Primary School**

**LEA: Southend-On-Sea**

**Inspection Date: 28<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

**Reporting Inspector: Pamela Brannigan**

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

**Type of School: Primary**  
**School Category: Voluntary Aided**  
**Age range of pupils: 3-11**  
**Gender of pupils: Mixed**  
**Number on roll: 254**  
**Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body**  
**Date of previous inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

**School Address:**  
**Windermere Road**  
**Southend-On-Sea**  
**Essex**  
**SS1 2RF**

**Tel. No. 01702 534546**  
**Headteacher: Mrs S. Nutman**  
**Chair of Governors: Mr J. Payne**

## Information about the school

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and Nursery is an average sized school in Southend on Sea in the county of Essex and part of the diocese of Brentwood. After a major building programme, the school is in the process of expanding from one to two form entry. At present there are two Reception classes and one class in each of the other year groups. The school serves the parishes of Sacred Heart and St John Fisher, Southend. There are currently 254 pupils aged 3-11 on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British Heritage with 42% coming from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Around 91% of pupils are Catholics with the remainder coming from other Christian denominations or other faiths. 47% of the teachers are Catholics and five have the CCRS qualification. The proportion of pupils with special needs is around the national average.

### Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding      2: Good      3: Requires improvement      4: Inadequate

### Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

**Grade 2**

Sacred Heart is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. These include the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from Catholic life, the way leaders promote and evaluate the provision for Catholic life and the quality of the prayer and collective worship provided by the school. The Catholic ethos is evident in the daily life of the school with prayer and worship being central to its work. Pupils are given many opportunities for spiritual and moral development through the curriculum and the wider life of the school. The quality of pupils' learning and progress in religious education is good as are the standards of attainment. There is regular monitoring of teaching, learning, and assessment. Governors know the school well and offer a good level of support. Pastoral care is good and shared by all staff. Relationships within the school and with the parish are very good and pupils feel well cared for and supported in their learning. Parents are happy with the standard of religious education and the way the school supports their children's faith journey.

The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement. The last inspection in 2011 affirmed the areas for development identified by the school which were linked to assessment, teaching and learning in religious education. The headteacher has a clear vision for future development which is shared with governors and the whole school community. She is also religious education subject leader and has produced a comprehensive action plan to sustain effectiveness and put in place further improvements. Regular, rigorous monitoring is ensuring that teaching is relevant and appropriate to children's needs.

The quality of self-evaluation is very good. The school documentation is accurate and gives a comprehensive analysis of the Catholic life of the school and religious education. There are strategies in place to share good practice and support new teachers. The well planned curriculum which follows the 'Come and See' programme enables pupils to make connections between faith and their own lives. Staff are encouraged to improve their skills through training and moderating sessions in school. There are plans for joint moderation of pupils' work with other deanery schools.

The current leadership has a very good capacity to maintain effectiveness. The headteacher shows excellent leadership of a Catholic community and is well supported by her deputy. Governors have a wide range of expertise and a good knowledge of the everyday life of the school. Systems are in place to develop and strengthen initiatives which are leading to good outcomes for all pupils.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Continue the process of improvement of teaching and learning in religious education with particular emphasis on staff development and subject knowledge.
- Continue to focus on assessment and planning to ensure teaching is differentiated to meet the needs of all groups of pupils.
- Establish developmental marking across the school to enable pupils to know how to improve their work.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

## **Grade 2**

Pupil achievement and progress in religious education are good. Most pupils spoken to said they enjoy religious education and work well together. They are eager to participate in activities and keen to do well. They have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and abilities. Lessons observed were well planned with a range of cross curricular activities. In a very good Year 5 lesson, pupils had been studying 'Laudato Si', Pope Francis' letter on care for our common world, and linked this with the creation story in Genesis. They followed this by writing to the Pope responding to his concerns by identifying ways in which even young children could show stewardship. This activity enabled pupils to engage with questions of care of creation in the light of religious teaching. Workbooks in most year groups are well presented although there were some examples of untidy work. Books show pupils' progress and coverage of the curriculum. Marking is generally positive although there are few comments to help pupils make the 'next steps' in their learning. Other faiths are taught well and include visits to a synagogue and a mosque.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They respond well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. The five house captains choose the charities they will support and the inspiration of the 'Year of Mercy' has led to the choice of groups which reflect the Corporal Works of Mercy. These include Cafod, Anchor House and the local foodbank. Pupils in each house collect one type of food and a group have visited the foodbank to see how it supports families in the area. Pupils are able to link this work with the life and teachings of Jesus. They have also attended a community event to help tidy the beaches in Southend. Pupils are given responsibilities to support the life of the school as ambassadors, peace police, playground friends and buddies. There are very good links with the local parish with masses in the adjacent church where pupils act as altar servers, readers and offertory takers. Pupils show consideration and respect for adults and each other. Behaviour is very good and pupils value the sense of security, friendship and community created within the school.

Prayer and collective worship are an integral part of school life. Pupils understand the importance of prayer and participate readily in class and assemblies. The cycle of celebrations reflects the Church's liturgical year and enables pupils to understand how faith links to everyday experiences. They respond positively to opportunities to develop their faith journey through meditation and reflective prayer. Pupils are involved in the preparation for Masses and assemblies and have a good grasp of religious terminology appropriate to their ages. They learn the traditional prayers of the Church as well as writing their own prayers, many of which were seen during the inspection. They are familiar with the school mission statement, 'Love of God, Love of one another, Love of our world, Love of learning'. Preparation for the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation in Year 3 are parish based with support from the school. Pastoral care is very good and pupils are aware of the support available to them. They feel safe, cared for and know where to go when they need help. A support worker from Brentwood Catholic Children's Society works alongside pupils each week. Parents value the care given to their children and the good level of communication with staff. Responses to a questionnaire were positive with many appreciative comments.

By the end of Key Stage 2 standards of attainment meet diocesan expectations and all groups make good progress. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of individuals and groups of pupils. The headteacher as subject leader gives religious education the same importance as other core subjects and uses staff meeting time and in-service sessions to support teachers. In a few classes pupils would benefit from a clearer focus in differentiation in their work.

## **Leaders and managers**

## **Grade 2**

The headteacher demonstrates very good leadership of the school through the way she promotes, monitors and evaluates the provision for the Catholic life of the school. She communicates a clear Catholic vision to the whole community and is supported in this by staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. The 'Year of Mercy' is being celebrated at present with a 'Door of Mercy' in the school building. During the inspection the headteacher assisted by pupils led a powerful whole school assembly based on stewardship and the concept of a perfect community. All pupils were invited to reflect on the contribution they could make

with older children supporting younger ones. The parable of the mustard seed was used most effectively to emphasise the role of the smallest in building the Kingdom of God.

Governors work closely with the headteacher and have a good understanding of strengths and areas for development. They are well informed about the life of the school through the headteacher's report and visits to school events as well as meetings with senior leaders. Along with the headteacher they monitor the school's provision for worship and religious education. Governors access training provided by the diocese which has enabled them to evaluate aspects of the religious life of the school and to challenge and support effectively.

As subject leader, the headteacher produces a targeted action plan each year and is very well placed to support new teachers of whom there are a number this year. She has paired experienced teachers as mentors for newer colleagues to offer support in planning lessons. She monitors religious education through workbook scrutiny, observing teaching and evaluating outcomes. Strategies are in place to ensure all pupils achieve well. These include a system to enable progress in religious education across the school to be tracked more accurately. Assessment is in place although not all tasks enable pupils to demonstrate their knowledge of the relevant concepts. Leaders support staff development and teachers are encouraged to undertake further training.

Leaders ensure that Sacred Heart School is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. Last year the status of a Unicef 'Rights Respecting' school level 1 was achieved which is leading to a greater understanding of equality, justice and peace issues. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities and participates in local community events. There are good links with other schools particularly the Catholic secondary schools to which most pupils transfer. Visitors and visits are arranged to support understanding of other faiths and cultures. Provision for spiritual development ensures that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences. Parents and are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress through regular meetings as well as the curriculum information letters and 'Wednesday Word' which enable them to support their children's learning.

## **Provision**

## **Grade 2**

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. During the inspection, lessons observed were good or better. Pupils are given an excellent start in Early Years which is built upon as they progress through the school. Lessons are planned with clear learning intentions and a range of activities. All groups of pupils make good progress. Behaviour for learning is very good. Teachers respond well to pupils' comments and take opportunities to extend knowledge and develop understanding. In most year groups well differentiated tasks enable pupils to work with enthusiasm and interest. Good support by teaching assistants is a feature of many lessons. Marking is positive although only a few examples included suggestions of ways to improve. There is every indication that current good standards are likely to be maintained.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is good. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The programme 'Come and See' has been implemented throughout the school and is now embedded. There are good quality resources including class sets of Bibles which give pupils better access to scripture. Religious education displays around the school emphasise the importance of faith to the work of the school. The curriculum enables pupils to become aware of their responsibility for each other and their environment. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development.

Provision for prayer and worship at Sacred Heart is outstanding. Assemblies and liturgies are well planned and contribute to pupils' spiritual development. They include visual presentations, Bible readings, drama, dance, singing and music. On 'Sacred Heart Day' pupils prepared hymns and the Our Father in French for the Mass to acknowledge St Margaret Mary Alacoque. This was followed by a French lunch to which parents were invited. Pupils are involved in collective worship in their classrooms and are given opportunities for personal reflection. During the inspection a group of Year 5 pupils planned and led classroom worship on the theme of 'Freedom'. They composed bidding prayers and linked Moses and the 10 Commandments with the responsibilities necessary for freedom. Each classroom has a prayer focus with religious artefacts and a display board which often includes

children's work. Feast day Masses are celebrated throughout the year with the parish community and the traditions of the Church are explored with pupils. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to many celebrations and pupils visit the church frequently. The parish priest supports the school through Masses and classroom visits. Pupils have the opportunity to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation at Advent and Easter.

The school is constantly seeking to develop practice to improve outcomes for pupils. The subject leader is reviewing assessment procedures to enable pupils to demonstrate their understanding of religious concepts more clearly. Tracking of pupils' progress is beginning to provide a clear picture of progress in both key stages. There is evidence that good outcomes for pupils are likely to be maintained or improved as the school consolidates and builds on current good practice in all areas.

The inspector would like to express her thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.