



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Inspection Report



Name of School: St Mary's Primary School

LEA: Thurrock

Inspection Date: 14th June 2017

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: 269
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: March 2012

School Address:
Calcutta Road
Essex
RM18 7QH

Tel. No. 01375 843254
Headteacher: Mrs M. Jones
Chair of Governors: Mrs S Yeboah-Jackson

Information about the school

St Mary's Catholic Primary School in Tilbury, Essex is part of the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the local parish of Our Lady Star of the Sea. There are currently 269 pupils aged 3-11 on roll and the school is now one form entry. The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds with 59% having English as an additional language. Around 77% of pupils are Catholics with almost all of the remainder coming from other Christian denominations. 67% of the teachers are Catholics and five have the CCRS qualification. The proportion of pupils with special needs is around the national average. The school is part of a deanery group which is likely to become a multi academy trust.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Mary's is an outstanding Catholic school with an ethos which is evident in its daily life. The quality of the prayer and collective worship provided by the school is excellent as is the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from its Catholic life. 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 very good as are the standards of attainment. There is regular, effective monitoring of teaching, learning, and assessment. Governors know the school well and offer a good level of support. Pastoral care is very good and shared by the local parish priest, governors and all staff. Relationships within the school and with the local parish are very good and pupils feel well cared for and supported in their learning. Parents are happy with the Catholic life of the school, the high standard of religious education and the good communication with staff.

The school has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement. After a number of changes in senior leadership there is now a permanent headteacher and deputy head who have put in place initiatives which are leading to good outcomes for all pupils. The last inspection in 2012 identified two areas for development: to further develop assessment and next step marking; to develop cross-curricular links and spread existing good practice. Both areas have been well addressed. Pupils are now given immediate verbal rather than written feedback and new teachers are given opportunities to observe good practice. The headteacher is currently religious education subject leader, a role she is sharing with her deputy. They have produced a comprehensive action plan to sustain effectiveness and put in place further improvements. They also give support and guidance to teachers to enable pupils to plan and lead classroom worship.

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. The 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 embarking on the CCRS course. There are good links with other deanery primary schools through in-service sessions and staff meetings. All new teachers are given clear guidance in assessment and levelling pupils' work.

The current leadership has an excellent capacity to maintain effectiveness. The headteacher shows outstanding leadership of a Catholic community through her vision for the school 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. They visit frequently and are involved in staff appointments as well as liaising with subject leaders. Initiatives are in place which are leading to very good outcomes for all pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the level of parents' involvement in the life of the school to enable them to have a better understanding of the religious education curriculum and Catholic life.
- Develop the moderating process of religious education with the deanery group..

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Pupil achievement and progress in religious education are very good. Pupils spoken to said they enjoy religious education and this is borne out by pupil surveys. Pupils observed during the inspection worked well together and were keen to achieve. 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 which

enabled all pupils to achieve well. An excellent Year 3 lesson used Rembrandt's 'Prodigal son' painting to make links between Jesus' parables and the belief in a loving and forgiving God. Pupils were fully engaged in interpreting aspects of the painting and making links with their own lives. Across the school workbooks are very well presented and verbal comments help pupils make the 'next steps' in their learning. Each pupil has an additional book with assessed pieces of work which follows them through their school years and enables teachers to ensure expected progress is made. Other faiths are taught well through the 'Come and See' religious education programme. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards of attainment meet or exceed diocesan expectations and all groups make good progress. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of individuals and groups of pupils. School leadership gives religious education the same importance as other core subjects and uses staff meeting time and in-service sessions to support teachers.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They helped to reshape the school's mission statement, 'The St Mary's Way.' The statement, 'Respect Ourselves, Respect others, Respect our school, Love God, is well known and understood by all members of the community. Pupils respond well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider world. They often suggest charities they wish to support and these have included Cafod, Brentwood Catholic Children's Society, Comic Relief and Little Havens Hospice. They also collect items for the local foodbank and have a good understanding of the work of these charities. Pupils are able to link this with the life and teachings of Jesus. They are given responsibilities to support the life of the school as school council members, faith councillors, 'yellow hat' dinner hall and playground helpers. There are very good links with the local parish with regular school Masses when pupils act as altar servers, readers and welcomers. The parish priest who provides pastoral support for staff and pupils comes in frequently and acts as an additional teaching resource. Pupils benefit from the employment of a counsellor from Brentwood Catholic Children's Society and other support is made available for pupils and their families when needed. 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. They are aware of the support available to them and feel safe, cared for and know where to go when they need help.

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 reflective prayer. Pupils are involved in the preparation for Masses and assemblies and have a good grasp of religious terminology appropriate to their ages. A newly formed 'Faith Council' is made up of two pupils from each class. They lead acts of worship and have meetings with the headteacher to support the prayer life of the school. All pupils learn the traditional prayers of the Church as well as writing their own, many of which were seen during the inspection. They are also familiar with Catholic devotions including the Rosary and a May procession which culminates in the Crowning of Mary. The school's feast day in May is also a major celebration beginning with a whole school Mass attended by families, parishioners and Sisters of Mercy whose order founded the school. Preparation for the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation in Year 3 are parish based with support from the school.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

The headteacher demonstrates excellent leadership of the school through the way she promotes, monitors and evaluates the provision for its Catholic life. She communicates a clear Catholic vision to the whole community and is supported in this by her deputy, staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. She has put in place clear and effective systems to monitor the religious education curriculum which form the basis for future planning and is resulting in very good outcomes for pupils. She has involved pupils by inviting their opinions on aspects of school life and asking them to give suggestions in promoting Catholic values. Parents are also sent an annual questionnaire relating to Catholic life and religious education. The headteacher's weekly newsletter for parents always includes aspects of Catholic life in the school. The Catholicity of the school is evident in displays in corridors, the hall and in the classroom prayer areas. Recently governors, parents and staff were invited to work alongside pupils to create 3D collages based on Bible stories chosen by pupils. These are on display throughout the school. Carefully planned assemblies, led by the headteacher or senior staff emphasise gospel values and aspects of the school's mission statement. During the inspection the headteacher supported by pupils led a powerful assembly in anticipation of the feast of Corpus Christi. She emphasised the way we are all part of one world and need to care for God's creation. Special prayers were said for the victims of a fire in London and all those who lost their lives and family members.

Many governors have a good knowledge and understanding of the school and are well informed about its life through the headteacher's report, learning walks, 'book looks', visits to school events as well as meetings with senior leaders. Along with the headteacher they monitor the school's provision for prayer and worship and religious education. They are invited to all school celebrations along with parents and parishioners. They fully understand that support for the Catholic ethos of the school is a priority when staff appointments are made. Governors have accessed 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. They also attend staff in-service training sessions.

The new deputy headteacher together with the headteacher has produced an action plan for religious education and is well placed to support new teachers. Together they monitor religious education through workbook scrutiny, observing teaching and evaluating outcomes. They give feedback after lesson observations which have resulted in improvements in teaching and learning. Training sessions for staff help them ensure that all pupils achieve well. Meetings of the deanery group to share understanding in developments in religious education are proving valuable and joint moderation of pupils' work is envisaged. The headteacher also presents information to the governing body to enable them to evaluate provision and development. The recent introduction of special religious education learning journals to promote pupils' ability to express their understanding through termly assessed topic tasks are providing a tool to track and level attainment. Staff development is given importance and teachers are encouraged to undertake further training from the diocese and to obtain the CCRS qualification.

School leaders ensure that St Mary's is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities as well as a Breakfast Club and participates in local community events. There are good links with other diocesan schools including the Catholic secondary schools to which many pupils transfer at the end of Key Stage 2. Provision for spiritual development ensures that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences. Parents are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress through regular meetings.

Provision

Grade 1

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is very good. During the inspection, lessons observed were good or better. Key vocabulary was introduced and revised leading to religiously literate pupils. Children are given a good 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 and behaviour for learning is also very good. Teachers respond well to pupils' comments and take opportunities to extend knowledge and develop understanding. Well differentiated tasks enable pupils to work with enthusiasm and interest. Class sets of bibles in Key Stage 2 support the study of scripture and Year 6 pupils were observed locating passages to illustrate their understanding of the anointing of the sick through the raising of Lazarus. In Year 5 pupils studied Isaiah's passage on the freedom given to us by God and made reference to the 10 Commandments as they considered the Christian response to God's laws. Pupils were able to work independently and hold quiet discussions with their talk partners as they considered their response. Good support by teaching assistants is a feature of many lessons. Pupils are informed verbally about ways to improve their work. There is every indication that current very good standards are likely to be maintained.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is excellent. Across the school 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. It is enhanced by participation in the Deanery Mass and an annual retreat day for Year 6 pupils. Strong links with the local parish also enhance the curriculum by visits from the local parish priest who has talked to pupils in assemblies, recently about the Lampedusa cross and the reason it came into being. There are good quality resources including a personalised prayer book and a set of Rosary beads for each child. In recent years the school has included examples of classical religious art to stimulate thought and discussion when studying scripture. These form a part of religious education displays around the school which emphasise the importance of bible stories to the work of the community. 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 St Mary's is outstanding. Assemblies and liturgies are well planned and contribute to pupils' spiritual development. They include visual presentations, Bible readings, drama, singing and music. Pupils are involved in collective worship in their classrooms and are given opportunities for

personal reflection. Each classroom has a prayer focus with religious artefacts and a display board which includes key religious vocabulary and children's work. The school chapel is available for pupils at lunchtimes and is used for meditation and reflection. The traditions of the Church are explored with pupils. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to many celebrations and pupils visit the local church to lead a Carol Service at Christmas. The parish priest supports the school through Masses and classroom visits. There are also termly services of Reconciliation.

The school is constantly seeking to develop practice to improve outcomes for pupils. The subject leader is reviewing procedures to involve parents more fully in the life of the school. Tracking of pupils' progress provides a clear picture of progress in both key stages. There is evidence that very good outcomes for pupils are likely to be maintained or improved as the school consolidates and builds on current very good practice.

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.