



## **DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD**



### **Inspection Report**

**Name of School:** St Mary's Catholic Primary School

**Local Authority:** Thurrock

**Unique Reference Number:** 115174

**Inspection Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> March 2012

**Reporting Inspectors:** Mr Derek Kelly  
Mrs Maureen Cosgrave

**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:** 4 - 11  
**Gender of pupils:** Mixed  
**Number on roll:** 314  
**Appropriate Authority:** The Governing Body  
**Date of previous Inspection:** January 2008

**School Address:**  
Calcutta Road  
Tilbury  
Essex RM18 7QH  
**Tel. No.** 01375 843254  
**Fax No.** 01375 840680  
**Chair of Governors:** Mrs Brenda Kearney  
**Headteacher:** Mr Jonathan Shields

## **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 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**

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Calcutta Road  
Tilbury  
Essex  
RM18 7QH**

**Head Teacher:                      Mr Jonathan Shields**

**Date of Inspection:                20<sup>th</sup> March 2012**

## **Description of the School:**

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided Catholic school situated in the County of Essex and in the trusteeship of the Diocese of Brentwood. The school was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1887. It is a larger than average size primary school. It admits pupils aged 3 to 11 years, 66% of the children are baptised Catholics. The school serves the parish of Our Lady Star of the Sea. The school has achieved Healthy School status and holds the ActiveMark award.

## **Record of Evidence Base:**

Two 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 8 lessons.
- Scrutiny of pupils' written work.
- Participation in an assembly.
- Meetings with the Headteacher, who is also the Religious Education (R.E.) Co-ordinator, the Chair of Governors and the Student Council.
- Observations of R.E. Displays in the Classrooms and around the school

## **What the School does well:**

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is good in its effectiveness as a Catholic school and displays some outstanding features. The headteacher and governors give very effective leadership to its Catholic life and ensure pupils of all abilities, cultures and social backgrounds are challenged to develop spiritually, morally and academically. The enthusiastic headteacher leads a strongly cohesive staff team. Guided by The St Mary's Way: *'Respect for yourself, respect for others and respect for our school'*, the whole school community work together to create a safe, stimulating and extremely well maintained and cared for learning environment, which has a direct impact on the personal well-being and educational success of the pupils. Parents, carers and parishioners, whom inspectors met at the start of their visit, were unanimous in their praise for the school. This excellent partnership with home and parish nourishes provision and makes the school a supportive and inclusive community.

Religious Education is central to the mission of the school. 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' Religious Education Programme is implemented across all Key Stages.

The lessons observed were nothing less than good with some outstanding features. The pupils benefit from consistently good teaching in religious education and make good progress.

Teachers plan their lessons carefully with clear learning objectives which are shared with pupils. Teachers display a secure understanding of 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' Religious Education Programme and have a coherent expectation of outcomes. A good range of teaching strategies are used so that lessons are lively and pupils are engaged. For example, talk partners and drama were used to good effect, as were picture prompts, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Teachers frequently share their own experiences to make lessons interesting and encourage pupil participation. One teacher talked about a confidence being betrayed by a member of her family, in order to stimulate discussion about Peter's denial of Jesus on Good Friday. Teachers make use of good questioning which challenge pupils to extend their thinking and encourages use of key vocabulary. The pupils' written work is regularly marked. The best examples contain both praise and guidance on the way to make progress. The school is working to enhance its rigorous assessment

procedures, so that all pupils understand the next steps in their learning and can reach the highest levels in R.E. as in other subjects.

Assessment in R.E. is a high priority and the school is continuing to develop focussed assessment opportunities at the conclusion of each of 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' topics, which inform the school of pupils' progress. Parents receive an annual report on their child's progress in R.E.

The leadership and management of Religious Education by the R.E. Co-ordinator, who is also the Headteacher is good.

The school meets both the national and diocesan requirements for the allocation of curriculum time for taught R.E.

R.E. displays and artefacts, in the classrooms support the pupils learning and enhance opportunities for prayer and reflection. Each classroom has a beautiful focal point for prayer, placed at child level, which is well used to support personal reflection. Resources for the study of other world faiths are also appropriate and a variety of visitors from other faith groups come to the school to explain their faith traditions to the pupils.

The St Mary's Way underpins all that is done within and beyond the school community. The pupils willingly undertake a number of responsible roles, such as; Prefects, Eco Prefects, Yellow Cap Play Leaders and Student Councillors. This reflects the school's commitment to nurturing each person as valuable and to encouraging personal endeavour. The Student Council is proud of its achievements of improving the playground and dining hall facilities, which benefit all pupils.

Relationships in the school are exceptionally positive and pupils are courteous, respectful and friendly towards adults and each other. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pastoral care is particularly good because it is based on personal knowledge of pupils' needs.

Prayer is central to the life of the school with many opportunities for prayer offered throughout the day. R.E. lessons often include a time for prayerful reflection; teachers create a calm atmosphere for pupils to reflect on their learning.

Collective worship is well planned to reflect community celebrations and the liturgical year. The inspection took place during Lent when there was a particular focus on preparation for Easter, with pupils being encouraged to reflect upon the events of the 'Way of the Cross'.

The Catholic ethos of the school permeates every aspect of the community. The Catholic life of the school is subscribed to by all the stakeholders – Governors, the Headteacher and his leadership team, staff, pupils and their parents and carers.

St Mary's Catholic Primary School values links with parents and carers who are involved with their children's learning and on receiving regular curriculum information, support them at home. One parent commented that, 'the school is like a family in which children feel safe and comfortable.'

There is a proactive Friends of St Mary's which organises social and fundraising events, such as the recent Spring Fair, to strengthen the school community. The Governors of the school are very dedicated and supportive of everything the school does and provide suitable challenge to the leadership of the school.

Close links with the Parish of Our Lady Star of the Sea and the Sisters of Mercy are strengths. The Parish Priest and Mercy Sisters are welcome visitors to the school. The pupils frequently visit the Convent Chapel and the Church of Our Lady Star of the Sea. Mass is celebrated regularly and parents are invited to attend and pupils are given the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent and Advent. The school actively supports the parish sacramental preparation programme, through relevant topics from 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' R.E. Programme and liaises with the parish catechist. The school also provides opportunities for the pupils to develop a strong sense of community through links with the local Catholic Secondary schools.

Contributions to the wider community are through fund raising for Little Havens Children's Hospice, Brentwood Catholic Children's Society, CAFOD and St Luke's Hospice. The school choir regularly sings at the regional shopping centre and at a local residential home, to entertain and raise funds for charity.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. They pray with confidence, have a well-developed sense of responsibility, respect and demonstrate a mature understanding of the needs of others. Provision for Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) is comprehensive and the school has fully implemented the Diocesan Sex Education programme, 'Journey in Love'.

### **What needs to be improved?**

To continue to develop rigorous assessment and next step marking in Religious Education in order to further raise pupil achievement.

To further develop cross-curricular links with Religious Education and spread existing good practise throughout the school.

The inspectors endorse the improvements identified by the school in the Section 48 Self Evaluation Form.

Overall, St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a good Catholic School with a good capacity for sustained improvement. It prepares its pupils well so that they make a successful transition to their Secondary Schools.