



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Unique Reference Number: 115199

Inspection Date: 18 May 2012

Reporting Inspectors: Dr Michael Sutherland-Harper and
Ms Maureen Perry

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: 205
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection:
6th March 2009

School Address:
Maltings Lane
Witham, Essex
CM8 1DX
Tel. No. 01376 513418
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Chair of Governors: Mrs Elizabeth Murphy
Headteacher: Mrs Ann Kelliher

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

Holy Family Catholic Primary School
Maltings Lane
Witham
Essex
CM8 1DX

Head Teacher: **Mrs Ann Kelliher**

Date of Inspection: **18 May 2012**

Description of the School:

Holy Family Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided Catholic school situated on the southern end of Witham in the county of Essex and in the diocese of Brentwood. The school is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The school serves the Catholic parishes of Holy Family and All Saints in Witham and St. Mary's in Silver End, with some children coming from outlying villages.

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 seven lessons.
- Participation in an assembly.
- Scrutiny of pupils' written work.
- Meetings with the following: the Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher who is also the Head of Religious Education (R.E.), the Parish Priest, the Chair of Governors and other governors, the School Council and a second representative group of pupils.
- Observations of R.E. displays in the classrooms and around the school.

What the School does well:

Holy Family Catholic Primary School is a good, and rapidly improving, Catholic school. Parents and carers, who talked to an inspector at the start of the inspection, spoke very positively about how happy their children were in the caring learning environment provided by the school. They appreciate the sense of belonging to the school which is encouraged by very good communication systems. The simple, clear mission statement: 'Living, loving and learning together', is at the heart of all the school does. Immediately one enters the building, display reflects the strong presence of Religious Education throughout the school. The prayerful focus continues throughout each classroom, which make the school a community living its faith. This emphasis on spirituality, together with a clear understanding of right and wrong and excellent learning relationships, make spiritual, moral, social and cultural development one of the strengths of the school. Close links with the local parish and regular visits from the caring, approachable parish priest help to give pupils a positive grounding in their faith. These links also encourage involvement with the local community, typified by the excitement which children demonstrated as they prepared for their first Holy Communion next weekend. The headteacher's clear vision, rooted in her ambition for the school, is shared by all staff. As a result, and also because of the confidence in learning and in relationship building which the school gives its pupils, the school is now moving forward at a rapid rate.

Pupils are proud of their school and help to keep it in an immaculate state. They have good attendance and high expectations of each other. The excellent and consistent standard of behaviour witnessed in classrooms during the inspection is a significant factor in helping to move learning forward. Interviews with the School Council and another representative group showed pupils to be an articulate group with clear ideas about how they could help the school, ideas based on their firm conviction that 'God is always with us, especially in troubled times'. Class assemblies featured prayers 'to make the world a better place' and prayers just before break mentioned a heart-felt wish that 'everything

should go well with our friends'. Pupils were clear that difficulties of any kind could be quickly sorted out because there is always an adult about who can help to ensure that they are safe in school at all times and that there is no bullying of any kind.

The strong leadership provided by the headteacher and the high standards for which she and the head of R.E are striving mean that standards in R.E. are high and rising. The governing body brings a range of skills to their work and is representative of the different cultures now making up the school. Governors are very supportive of the school and proud of the fact that any spaces on the governing body are easily filled. They are very keen to develop Catholic nursery provision on the site following recent rapid and successful fundraising to develop the front of the school. Governors have an extra meeting each January to look at attainment data, thereby helping to ensure that the progress of all pupils is closely tracked. They are very supportive of the headteacher's policy of being pro-active and 'not waiting for things to happen' and are always prepared to offer a challenge to help take the school forward.

Religious Education (R.E.) is a key part of the school's strong curriculum provision with links developing across subjects, typified by good use of art, music, thinking skills and literacy to take the subject forward. Clear links are made between pupils' everyday life and Gospel values. The R.E. curriculum is based on the 'Here I Am' Religious Education programme of study, recommended by the Bishop of the Diocese, and which is fully implemented. The school meets both the national and diocesan requirements for the allocation of curriculum time for taught R.E. Teachers make good use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and a range of other resources to engage pupils with R.E. Visits and visitors enhance pupil understanding but opportunities to visit places of worship associated with other religions are at present limited. Attainment is above average. In R.E. lessons, pupils settle readily to work, work co-operatively with each other and adults and are provided with good opportunities for reflection. Such opportunities reinforce spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and are facilitated by the clear schemes of work provided by the experienced head of department who is also deputy headteacher. All groups of pupils make good progress in R.E. and best practice is now being more frequently shared in the subject to ensure that increasing numbers of pupils make outstanding progress. In an excellent Year 4 lesson, brisk pace, constant challenge and clear expectations were closely partnered with opportunities for reflection and skillful teacher questioning. As a result, pupils' understanding of the subject and of themselves advanced together. Provision for prayer is a regular and strong feature of all classrooms and lessons.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in R.E. is good and improving, Staff have high and increasing expectations of pupil achievement. They are looking at ways to provide further challenge for the more able and different ways to involve pupils more in explaining their thinking and conclusions to their peers. Lessons are carefully planned. Teachers and support staff work effectively together to ensure that pupils are well nurtured in learning and that pastoral care is of a very high quality because each pupil is known as an individual but also regarded as an essential part of the whole learning community. Colourful displays are a prominent feature of the main school areas and of

all classrooms. They reflect the school's links with its local community and charities as well as the strong links the school has maintained with former pupils. Exercise books are regularly marked with good use of praise to recognise and encourage efforts and neat presentation but assessment is sometimes inconsistent in showing pupils exactly how to take their learning and efforts to the next level.

The growing emphasis on thinking skills and reflection means that spiritual, moral and social understanding are strong. Pupils' well-developed sense of right and wrong and of the importance of relationships is typified by the excellent atmosphere in the playground at break time. The school has a well thought out play leader scheme which has given older pupils increased responsibility, a challenge which they have relished. The school has been pro-active in ensuring that the rich and growing range of cultural backgrounds offered by pupils is fully celebrated in the school. Carefully prepared school assemblies ensure that Gospel values are highlighted, pupil achievement of any sort is celebrated and children become confident and articulate learners ready for the next stage of their education.

What needs to be improved?

- **Make all teaching and learning outstanding with raised expectations of pupil contributions in class and increased opportunities for pupils to take the lead in explaining what they have learned and how they reached their conclusions.**
- **Provide further guidance and challenge to pupils through marking about how to take their work to the next level and thereby further improve their efforts.**

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

Holy Family Catholic Primary School is a good and rapidly improving school with a strong capacity for sustained improvement. The school is an inclusive learning community where close knowledge and understanding of each pupil ensure that they are also valued as an individual.