



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: St Helen's Catholic Infant School

LEA: Essex
URN: 115307

Inspection Date: 7th October 2008

Reporting Inspectors: Ms Colette Dawson and Mr Derek Kelly

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

Type of School: Infant
School Category: Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils: 4 - 7
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 230
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous Inspection: May 2004

School Address:
Queen's Road
Brentwood Essex CM14 4EY
Tel. No. 01277 215626
Fax No. 01277 201114
Chair of Governors: Mrs Ann Camp
Headteacher: Mrs Sheila Rainsford

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

St Helen's Catholic Infant School
Queens Road
Brentwood
Essex
CM14 4EY

Head Teacher: Mrs Sheila Rainsford

Date of Inspection: 7th October 2008

Description of the School:

St Helen's Infant School is a voluntary aided Catholic school situated in the County of Essex and in the Diocese of Brentwood. It is a large three - form entry school located adjacent to the Cathedral parish. St Helen's is an oversubscribed and very popular school.

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 complete lessons.
- Scrutiny of pupils' written work.
- Participation in an Assembly.
- Meetings with the Head teacher who is also the R.E. Co-ordinator, the Chair of Governors and the School Council.
- Observations of R.E. Displays in the Class rooms and around the school.

What the School does well:

St Helen's is an outstanding Catholic School which displays many strengths. It is firmly committed to developing its Catholic identity under the inspirational and leadership of its Head teacher who is very well supported by her Deputy and her Leadership team, committed Governors, highly motivated Staff, Pupils and the Parish Priests.

Religious Education (R.E.) is an area of high focus in the school. The **'Here I Am'** programme, recommended by the Bishop of the Diocese, is fully implemented. The 'Before You Begin' element of the process is securely embedded at the beginning of each topic. Staff plan in Year Groups and share ideas about the topics informally. They clearly understand the **'Here I Am'** process and use it effectively to provide a high quality and stimulating curriculum. Information Communication Technology (ICT) is used effectively to enhance the quality of lessons.

The overall quality of teaching and learning in R.E. is outstanding. Lessons are well planned and learning objectives are stated, explained and revisited. In all of the lessons observed, pupils were on task, engaged, highly motivated, challenged and enjoying their R.E. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils were enthusiastic and purposeful and worked well together. The school uses **its Mission Statement 'Love One Another'** as a model for everything the school does. For example it is the inspiration behind the Prayer Leaders, Talk Partners and Walk Partners which are part of life at St Helen's Infant School. These and relationships and class management are recognised strengths of the school.

Assessment in R.E. is consistent in all year groups. It is systematic, rigorous and informative. There are focussed assessment opportunities for the end of each of the **'Here I Am'** topics which gives excellent evidence of **'Relate'** knowledge and understanding and termly topic evaluations that assess the overall learning intention. These are differentiated. Positive feedback is given to the pupils and this enables them to make progress.

The leadership and management of the R.E. by the Head teacher who is also the R.E. Co-ordinator are outstanding. Her leadership drives the assessment procedures used

by all the teachers, she monitors R.E. lessons and is very supportive of all staff, teachers and teaching assistants. Her line of management ensures that there are good links between R.E., the liturgical life of the school and Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education.

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

Collective Worship, liturgical celebrations, the celebration of major Saints' feast days, and the school's links with the Cathedral parish are all strengths of St Helen's School. The school has a Prayer Tree which situated in the Foyer.

St Helen's School promotes an outstanding and tangible Catholic ethos. This is subscribed to by all the stakeholders – Governors, the Head teacher and her leadership team, staff, pupils and their parents. The School provides outstanding opportunities for the pupils to develop a strong sense of community through activities which engender feelings of loyalty and belonging. The School continues to develop strong links with other schools in the Deanery and beyond. Links with the Secondary Schools are in place. The emphasis on community is another strength of the school. 'Contributions to the wider community are through links with the local parishes, the collections they make for charity and their contact with a school in Kenya. (Ofsted May 2008)

R.E. displays and artefacts, in the classrooms and around the School, are outstanding in their range and quality.

St Helen's Infant School values links with parents with every effort being made to improve and maintain communication with parents as their children progress through the school. There is a proactive Parent Teachers' Association which organises social and fundraising events. The governors of the school are very dedicated, hardworking and supportive of everything the school does.

Pupils are given every opportunity to become responsible citizens. This is evident in their concern for each other and for those who are in need. This is particularly evidenced by the work and role of the School Council and the generous fundraising for the charities that the School supports. The older pupils take on a variety of responsible roles.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is an outstanding strength of the School. They celebrate different cultures and enjoy themed weeks and special days. Resources for the study of other Faiths are excellent.

What needs to be improved?

There are no specific areas requiring improvement other than ensuring that the areas highlighted by the Section 48 Self Evaluation Form continue to be addressed. .

Overall St Helen's Infant School is an outstanding Catholic School which displays many strengths. It prepares its pupils so that they transfer to their Junior Schools as happy, well-adjusted young people who are a credit to themselves, their parents and

their School. The School owes much of its success to the strong and committed leadership of the Head teacher, her Deputy and her Leadership Team and to the valued support and expertise of her staff and governors.