



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Denominational (S48) Inspection Report

Name of School: New Hall School

Local Authority:

Inspection Date: 7th December 2018

Reporting Inspector: Damian Fox (Lead Inspector)
Stephen Beck (Associate Inspector)

This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 and 2011.

Type of School:	Primary/Secondary	School Address:	The Avenue
School Category:	Independent		Boreham
Age range of pupils:	3 – 18		Chelmsford
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		CM3 3HS
Number on roll:	1210	Tel. No:	01245 467 588
Appropriate Authority:	The Governing Body	Headteacher:	Mrs Katherine Jeffrey
Date of previous inspection:	November 2013	Chair of Governors:	Dr Miriam Edelsten

Information about the school

New Hall is an independent boarding and day school for girls and boys aged 3-18. The school is in Chelmsford, Essex. Pupils come from local, national and international communities. There are currently 1210 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils live within 5 miles of the school, though there is also a sizeable boarding population of around 240 UK and overseas boarders. 24% of pupils are Catholics, with most of the remainder coming from other Christian denominations and some coming from other faiths or none. 21% of the teachers are Catholics and eleven have the CCRS or similar qualification. The proportion of pupils with special needs is below the national average.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

Leaders and Governors provide outstanding leadership. The vision for leadership is a clear expression of their belief that they are there to serve. Staff and pupils understand this and live out a mission based on Gospel values. The Principal and her leadership team constitute an empowering and an inspirational presence in the promotion of the 'Catholic Life of the School' and standards of teaching and learning in Theology. Governors are expert, experienced and knowledgeable. They are visionary for the school and the development of Catholic education beyond. They want students to carry the seed of faith with them to make a difference in society. Governors make a significant contribution to the 'Catholic Life of the School'. They are committed to the school's mission, are actively involved in its evaluation and are ready to challenge as well as support where necessary. The inspirational leadership of Theology in key stages 3-5 is outstanding. The recently introduced model of RE leadership in the Preparatory Divisions is already showing a significant impact on provision and progress. Pupils in this part of the school are provided with an excellent start to their educational career spiritually, academically and emotionally as a result of the input from the Senior Division Second in Theology, members of the Theology department and strong effective leadership in the Preparatory Divisions. This has served to challenge, further raise expectations and make young pupils aspirational for success in this subject area. This has the capacity to enhance progress further. Standards of teaching and learning across all key stages are outstanding. Outcomes reflect the school's ambitions for each pupil. High expectations show the determination of the school for pupils to achieve at least expected outcomes in Theology. Challenging targets are set. Pupils respond positively to the challenge and grow in self-confidence because of the encouragement and praise from teachers. Catholic Life has a profound impact on the lives of all pupils. Pupils articulate a deep understanding of their responsibilities to each other. Consequently, behaviour is exemplary at all times. They are respectful of each other and work together to create a calm and prayerful community in which all are valued. The provision of Collective Worship is outstanding. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to pray together or individually. Chaplaincy has a significant impact on the life of the school. It is highly effective in providing liturgy that is accessible to all students and inspires thoughtful spiritual responses from pupils. The priest chaplain provides exceptional support and leadership to the whole community. Strong and supportive pastoral care reflects the school's commitment to educating pupils intellectually, morally and spiritually. The profoundly spiritual and caring ethos pervades all aspects of school life. Pupils articulated their understanding of their vocation to serve.

What the school should do to improve further:

- To continue development of the excellent model of leadership of Religious Education that has been established in the Preparatory Division.
- To explore opportunities to share their exemplary practice and support beyond the school.
- Maintain the current outstanding chaplaincy provision.

The 'Catholic Life of the School' is outstanding. In every interview with Inspectors, the sense of togetherness was one of the defining characteristics of New Hall School. Pupils in all year groups demonstrate pride in belonging to a community that is welcoming and reassuring. This is reflected in the profound way pupils benefit from and make a significant contribution to the 'Catholic Life of the School'. Pupils of all ages were erudite in describing the high level of mutual care and respect pupils have. One pupil described the school as integrated. They are genuinely supportive of each other in tangible ways, for example, the way older pupils ensure new pupils, especially boarders, settle into the daily routines with ease and confidence. It is one family, irrespective of age or faith background, in which each member is a person of dignity and uniqueness. Consequently, behaviour is exemplary throughout the school. Pupils embrace the demands and expectations that belonging to the school entails. As a result, they willingly take on responsibilities in promoting and sustaining the school's mission to serve and inspire excellence in others. Pupils' understanding of Catholic social teaching is demonstrated by their enthusiastic response to the needs of others in the local and wider community. Activities to raise awareness of others' needs and inspire a response are deeply engrained in the mindset of teachers and pupils. Student leadership is demonstrated by pupils of all ages. In the classroom, liturgical celebrations and activities are designed to provide for their personal development. As a result, they are happy, confident and secure in contributing to the growth of the 'Catholic Life of the School'. Chaplaincy prefects are regularly recognised at Diocesan Citizenship Awards at Brentwood Cathedral for tireless work raising money for charity. A vocation to serve others is demonstrated by a unique feature of the school: the in-house charity, the New Hall Voluntary Service. More than 400 pupils, supported by adults and sixth form student leaders, run many events to raise awareness and money for others. For example, they help plan and run the NHVS children's charity day camp for local children. The impact of the outstanding level of pastoral care enables all pupils to participate in all aspects of school life. Pastoral support for the whole student body constitutes a significant strength of the school, evidenced in interviews with pupils of all ages.

The School Mission Statement is a clear and inspiring expression of the educational mission of the Church. All staff are committed to implementing it as evidenced in the way pupils spoke warmly of the support, praise and encouragement they receive. There is a strong sense of community at all levels, evident in the high-quality relationships and the centrality of prayer to the whole community. It is a wonderfully calm, harmonious and prayerful community. The school empowers pupils to live the mission of the Church with opportunities to serve the local and wider community. They are inspired and encouraged to give of themselves to making New Hall an authentic Catholic school. Pastoral care represents a significant strength of the school, evidenced in interviews with governors, staff and pupils. All were eager to highlight the tangible togetherness and mutual high regard, regardless of faith and background. Chaplaincy provision is exemplary in the growth of spirituality across the school. It plays a significant role in developing an environment in which each person has dignity and is confident in their role within the school. The impact is demonstrated by the way it permeates through everything the school does. Spirituality is present in concept and in reality. The school's approach to behaviour is rooted in love and reconciliation. Pupils highlighted how the supportive nature of relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils across year groups, contributes to their pastoral well-being.

The school's leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. Leaders are totally committed to the academic, social and spiritual development of each member of the community. The development of the 'Catholic Life of the School' is viewed by Leaders and Governors as a core leadership responsibility. They demonstrate a clear understanding of their role in providing a community of prayer, one that is strongly founded on the commandment to love, evidenced in particular by its modelling by the whole staff. The self-evaluation is a coherent reflection of their awareness of the strengths of the school and areas for development. The Principal knows the school and demonstrates an understanding of education that has a profound impact on the growth of prayer and spirituality in the school. Her faith and sense of mission are recognised and shared by the whole community. She is strongly supported by senior leaders whose commitment to pupils is appreciated and respected by them. The impact of chaplaincy cannot be overstated. Under the guidance of the resident priest, the chaplaincy team of staff and pupils provide highly effective service to the community through liturgy, organising fundraising activities and their role as mentors to younger pupils. The School Development Plan

highlights how in all seven strategic aims of the school, they aim to “live out the school’s distinctive Catholic ethos” which is at the heart of everything they do.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Grade 1

Outcomes in Theology are consistently outstanding, making Theology the highest performing department in the school. Theology at all key stages is a particular strength of the school, reflecting its position within the core curriculum in a Catholic school. Attainment at GCSE and A Level since the last inspection has been consistently outstanding. Pupils, relative to their age, are religiously literate. In all lessons observed during the inspection, pupils displayed a wide range of skills to develop their understanding of scriptural, theological and sacramental questions. Inspectors agree with the school’s self evaluation that ‘students’ passion for the subject is clearly evident’. Although pupils join the school from local, national and international schools, school data show that pupils make outstanding progress at all key stages. Value added data demonstrates that students make exceptional progress against baseline predictions. SEND and EAL pupils make progress in line with their peers. For example, 89% of EAL pupils achieved grades 9-7 in Theology. All pupils approach lessons with great interest and enjoyment. There was unanimous affirmation during interviews and observations, that pupils enjoy Theology because of the way they are guided to understand complex concepts. The three-year trend of average standardised residuals for ALIS show that the Theology department is the highest performing in the school. Theology is the most popular A level subject, with 61 students opting to study it this year. Behaviour is exemplary throughout the school. Attitudes to learning are outstanding, reflecting the high level of motivation to achieve.

Lesson observations and reviews of student work during the inspection confirm the school’s judgement that teaching is outstanding at all key stages. Teachers are highly effective in consistently planning and delivering high-quality lessons linked to pupils’ current assessment. As a result, pupils continue to consolidate and extend their learning. Teachers have a high level of confidence because of their excellent subject knowledge and a range of inspiring methods that engage and challenge pupils. For example, the use of visual aids enabled pupils to develop a deeper understanding of the Sacrament of Baptism. Collaboration between pupils in Key Stage 3 lessons clearly inspired an understanding of a range of scriptural and theological questions, such as in the study of Mark’s account of the Crucifixion. As a result, pupils are highly motivated and sustain high levels of concentration. A rigorous and robust process of assessment is in line with school policy and is used to identify pupils who make exceptional progress or who may need further support. As a result, they concentrate well and have a clear understanding of their level of progress and how to improve further. The Firefly program is used to provide an array of resources and support materials which pupils confirmed enables them to improve their independent learning beyond the classroom. Pupils respond positively to a recognition of their achievement. Pupils who demonstrate excellence and endeavour strive to be the ‘Theologian of the Week’.

Leaders and Governors ensure that the Theology curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops’ Conference and that the required amount of curriculum time is given in each key stage. Leaders and Governors use their experience and expertise to ensure that standards of teaching, learning and assessment continue to improve. They are ambitious for pupils’ excellence in Theological understanding. The Principal is an inspirational leader and is passionately committed to the academic achievement of each pupil as evidenced in the relentless drive for high-quality teaching. Her tangible support in the form of staffing and resources confirms that Theological understanding goes beyond public rhetoric. The Link Governor is a former headmistress. She uses her experience to ensure Governors know and understand the strengths of the Theology Department and the Preparatory R.E. Department and those areas for further development. For example, leadership of R.E. in the Preparatory Division benefits from the Theological expertise of Senior Division teachers. Peer observations have ensured the development of subject knowledge at all key stages. Leadership of Theology is informed by a high level of expertise and vision that focusses relentlessly on improving teaching and learning. The R.E. Subject Leaders’ expert leadership has a profound impact on the consistent improvement in teacher confidence and methodology. As a result, pupils are totally engaged in learning and achieve outstanding outcomes. Teaching of the ‘Come and See’ programme for R.E. in the Preparatory Divisions

is marked by high quality teaching that benefits from strong teacher subject knowledge, good use of cross curricular links, quality differentiation and self-confidence engendered in pupils that sees them constantly aspire to do better, a challenge to which they rise.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Grade 1

Acts of Collective Worship engage all pupils' interests and inspire them in deep thought and heartfelt response. There is a high level of respect and reverence for the prayer and liturgical experiences as evidenced in assemblies and prayer sessions during the inspection. They were marked by high-quality communal singing and participation in prayers. Pupils readily take the initiative in leading acts of worship. They affirmed their level of participation and their readiness to help prepare bidding prayers, act as servers and readers and provide music. Liturgical celebrations are enhanced by the strong support from the chaplaincy team and Music department. The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community, has a profound effect on the spiritual and moral development of pupils, irrespective of faith background. In Preparatory Divisions, pupils assist in leading Class Masses for Key Stage 2 pupils and Class Liturgies for Key Stage 1 pupils. A highlight is the celebration for the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, during which they had a blessing of animals brought in by parents. The greatest testament of the response and level of participation is the reverence with which pupils conduct themselves. A Preparatory Division assembly attended on the theme of 'The Impact of War', was marked by the independence pupils demonstrated in leading worship that had a real depth of meaning and created an atmosphere of true 'awe and wonder'.

The community is fortunate to have a resident priest chaplain who has built up a team of staff and pupils who have a significant impact on the quality of provision for Collective Worship. Celebrations of the Eucharist for the whole community take place throughout the year, particularly at key times in the life of the school. For example, daily Mass, Foundation Day Mass, class Masses and processions in honour of Mary and Corpus Christi. Boarders celebrate Mass every Sunday evening. Prayers are part of the daily routine every morning. Each tutor group is provided with resources to support the quality of prayer. The prayer intentions book gives pupils the opportunity to offer their own reflections and intentions. Pupils are at ease when praying individually or together. They respect the school chapel and display their understanding of the significance and value of it as a place of worship. The Preparatory Chapel is a visually stunning addition. It reflects the school's determination to develop a deeply spiritual community. Opportunities to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation are afforded to pupils during Advent and Lent. A unique feature of the liturgical provision is the Sacrament of Confirmation that is available for staff and pupils who wish to celebrate the final Sacrament of Initiation into the faith.

Leaders, including chaplains, have expert knowledge of how to provide policies and guidelines to ensure quality planning and delivery of Collective Worship. They have an extensive understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts. The Principal is passionately committed to building an authentic Catholic community. Together, with senior leaders, she has ensured that a strong and highly effective chaplaincy team across staff and pupils provides and leads prayer and worship that is deeply spiritual and has a profound impact on the community. Chaplaincy constitutes a significant strength of the school. The resident priest contributes outstanding leadership with his passion for providing opportunities for pupils to experience the efficacy of prayer during acts of worship. This extends across the whole school and his skill at engaging with pupils of all ages is exceptional. In doing so, he both supports and develops each individual's faith journey in a way that supports the work of the school in preparing pupils to confidently promote their faith and beliefs as they progress through life in often secular environments. There is affirmation of the trust placed in the chaplain by the school community. Leaders place the highest priority on the professional development of staff and provide a range of CPD opportunities, for example, inset entitled 'Chaplaincy and RE provision at New Hall' and 'How to lead tutor group prayer effectively'.