



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: St John's Catholic Special School
LEA: Essex
Inspection Date: April 27 2016
Reporting Inspector: Damian G Fox and Derek Kelly

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

Type of School: Special
School Category: Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils: 5 - 19
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 83
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: March 2011

School Address:
Turpins Lane
Chigwell
IG8 8AX

Tel. No. 020 8504 1818
Headteacher: Mrs S Burnside
Chair of Governors: Fr Bob Hammill

Information about the school

St John's is a Catholic Special School in the County of Essex in the diocese of Brentwood. It is a non-maintained special school in the trusteeship of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. The school's designation is for pupils with moderate to severe and complex learning difficulties, including communication difficulties and associated such as autism. There are 83 pupils on roll. The school is co-educational and its age range is 5 – 19. A post 19 special college for adults has recently been established.

28% of pupils are Catholic. 38% are from other Christian faiths. 20% are from other faith backgrounds. The school is located within the parish of St Thomas of Canterbury, but is most closely associated with the Chigwell Convent.

The school admits pupils from 12 local authorities, including areas of great deprivation. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average at 48%. 8% of pupils are in the care of the local authority with a significant number known to social care. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

There are 18.8 fte. teachers, of whom 13 are Catholic. There are three teachers of Religious Education, all of whom have CCRS.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St John's is an outstanding school at all levels. Leaders, governors and managers demonstrate a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education. Governors are supportive of the school and are fully informed of progress and areas for development.

It is a model of the Gospel in action. There is a wide range of opportunities for every pupil to succeed at their own level and participate fully in the life of the community.

The school is very fortunate to have the Convent in the same grounds and a Chapel which they often use. The Chair of Governors, who is also the Chaplain, is a regular and reassuring presence in the community. He provides outstanding service to staff and pupils in engaging them in the preparation of and participation in collective worship and sacramental preparation. The school's close working relationship with the trustees ensures that the charism and vision of the founding order permeates the whole life of the pupils and families of St John's.

The Headteacher's vision for the school and her deep commitment to the lives of the young people is tangible and much valued by parents and pupils.

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school. There are excellent opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pastoral care for pupils is outstanding. Relationships within the school are very good and pupils feel well cared for and supported in their learning. Parental feedback shows that overwhelmingly, parents are happy with the provision of the school and the love and care the staff give to their children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make the expectations of working in a Catholic Special school more explicit when revising the Specialist teachers' standards.
- Provide high quality teaching in Religious Education to assist pupils to self-assess and reflect on their own learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Given their complex difficulties, and the fact that all pupils are operating outside of age related expectations, pupils are making good progress throughout all key stages. Pupils' achievement in Religious Education is assessed on entry to the school. Progress is further assessed at key points throughout the year using the P level descriptors. CASPA data and internal assessments show that in all accredited programmes, including AQA entry level, achievement in lessons in Religious Education are high.

Pupils show great enthusiasm in Religious Education and their behaviour is almost always excellent. Teachers are highly skilled at helping all pupils concentrate on their learning. As a result, pupils are highly motivated. They show a lot of respect for each other.

Pupils benefit hugely from the Catholic life of the school. They value and respect the Catholic practice. They are proud of themselves and the school and have a strong sense of personal worth.

They are aware of the needs of others in the school and the wider community. They take a lead in fundraising activities, such as the cake sale for the guide dogs appeal. They are particularly close to the fundraising work of the HCPT. The school's annual pilgrimage to Lourdes reflects a deep understanding of their mission to serve their pupils and families.

Pupils look up to the 6th formers as role models and as big brothers and sisters.

Relationships within the school are excellent. The ethos of genuine care is nourished by teachers' deep understanding of their mission of service. Pupils show trust in adults. They feel safe and happy.

The greatest sense of St John's mission is demonstrated at times of collective worship. All pupils sing and pray together. In the school assembly, pupils led the singing of all the hymns by signing. The whole community joined in with gusto, and, where appropriate, showed great awareness of how to pray quietly and with reverence. The message of mercy and new life was understood and well received by the pupils.

Leaders, Governors and Managers

Grade 1

Leaders, governors and managers at all levels are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. They are very aware of the significance of the school as a Roman Catholic specialist school and its role in extending the original charism of the founding Order.

Daily life of the school reflects its commitment to serving the pupils who have many varied complex difficulties. The Catholic mission of the school is given a high priority with the spiritual and moral development of pupils.

Self-evaluation is honest and accurate and is based on rigorous and searching analysis and self-challenge. Consequently, planning and strategic action for further improvements are in place.

Governors and leaders serve the needs of others in the extensive outreach programme of support and training for other schools, e.g. social inclusion links with another Catholic school.

Minutes of their meetings show a rigorous monitoring process. They know where they are going and how to get there.

Provision

Grade 1

Teaching is never less than good and is often outstanding. Pupils are always engaged and motivated. Teaching styles are adapted so that all pupils' needs are met. Teachers have a calm manner and challenge pupils appropriately. Support staff make an excellent contribution to the lesson, working effectively with the teacher. As a result, no pupil is ever without support and guidance. There is an obvious impact of the school's multi-sensory approach.

The school is innovative in the manner in which it presents the curriculum. It is dynamic and is responsive to pupils' needs. It is carefully adapted to include regular reinforcement and repetition of key concepts.

In its wider sense, the curriculum is excellent. There is a strong sense of belonging, echoed in the unofficial school hymn, "It's me who builds up the community". Pupils know they are in a

special school but they also see themselves as special. They are happy and valued in St John's. Former pupils often go to Lourdes with the school. The Parish Priest commented that several older pupils have chosen to convert to the faith.

The school provides collective worship of a high quality. It is central to the life of the school. Prayer opportunities for the pupils are well planned. As a result, pupils respond enthusiastically and reverently. They demonstrate an awareness of why they pray and worship, both as a community and individually. The Church's seasons are the focal points in the school's life.