



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Inspection Report

Name of School: Our Lady Immaculate School

LEA: Essex

Inspection Date: 23 May 2018

Reporting Inspector: Pamela Brannigan

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: 217
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: May 2013

School Address:
New London Road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 0RG

Tel. No. 01245 353755
Headteacher: Mrs P. Barningham
Chair of Governors: Sr S. Sumner

Information about the school

Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School is one form entry in Chelmsford, Essex and part of the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parishes of Our Lady Immaculate and Holy Name in Chelmsford. There are currently 217 pupils aged 4-11 on roll. The proportion of Catholic pupils is almost 100% and the school is over subscribed. Pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds, the largest being White British at 67%. English as an additional language is spoken by 27% of pupils, above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is around the national average. There are close links with other Catholic schools in Chelmsford and the deanery including the secondary school to which many pupils transfer at the end of Key Stage 2.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

Our Lady Immaculate is an outstanding Catholic School. Strong and effective leadership gives a clear sense of purpose and direction to the Catholic life of the school. Pupils benefit from excellent opportunities for spiritual and moral development which are part of the provision for religious education, prayer and collective worship. The Catholicity of the school is evident in all aspects of its work. There is a clear focus on reviewing provision as well as putting in place robust systems for teaching, learning, assessment and monitoring. Pastoral care is very good and shared by the designated chaplain as well as all members of the school community. Pupils enjoy school and appreciate opportunities given to be involved in all aspects of its life. Parents praise the high standard of education, the school's Catholicity and strong leadership. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' standards of attainment meet or exceed diocesan expectations.

The school has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement. The last inspection in 2013 identified the need to encourage pupils to follow up teacher comments in work books and to ensure staff have further in-service training for the implementation of the 'Come and See' religious education programme. These areas have been very well addressed and are evident in pupils' books and teachers' planning. Improved assessment and careful tracking have led to high standards of attainment in religious education. The school's mission statement, 'To live, love and learn together knowing Jesus Christ', together with the core values of respect, aspiration, dedication, hope and faith, has been reviewed by pupils, staff and governors and is well known by the whole community. The subject leadership for religious education is shared by the headteacher and a senior member of staff. They both have an excellent understanding of their role and are well placed to support colleagues. The school gives a high profile to religious education and has effective strategies to share good practice with new staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement the areas for development identified in the religious education action plan.
- Continue to work with parents to ensure they have a good understanding of the role of homework in religious education.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Attainment and progress in religious education are very good. Pupils work with interest and commitment, say they enjoy their religious education lessons and appreciate the wide range of tasks involved. Behaviour for learning is very good and pupils are fully engaged and enthusiastic. They work well together whether in groups or pairs. Pupils are given an excellent start in Early Years which is built upon as they progress through the school. Older pupils can work independently and use research skills to extend their understanding. In an excellent Year 6 lesson pupils studied the parable of the 'Good Samaritan' from Luke's gospel as an illustration of how we should live. In the discussion which followed pupils were able to identify other passages from scripture where Jesus' message of compassion and healing was expressed. They were able to link his teaching to their lives today and also consider and debate the sentence, 'Compassion is nothing less than extending God's grace to a hurting world.' The school has made an investment in teaching assistants which is ensuring all groups of pupils are well supported. As a result, pupils have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith and religious vocabulary

appropriate to their ages. Careful differentiation through questioning and challenging tasks is ensuring all pupils make good progress. Workbooks are very well presented and show coverage of the curriculum. Standards of attainment are in line with and often exceed diocesan expectations.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They respond very well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. They are keen to take on responsibilities including membership of the Worship team, 'Mini Vinnies,' buddies, anti-bullying ambassadors, head boy and girl, as house captains and as school council members. All Year 6 pupils are prefects and are given responsibilities to support the life of the school. The newly established 'Mini Vinnie' group have led fund raising efforts to support charities chosen by other pupils. Many local, national and international charities are supported throughout the year including Brentwood Catholic Children's Society, Cafod, Christmas Child and the local hospice. Pupils understand that the teachings of Jesus underpin their response to the needs of others. The school also enables pupils to see themselves as global citizens through links with the Global Noticeboard which enabled them to take part in a five-week programme exploring homelessness both at home and abroad in 2016. Parents were also enabled to contribute to this project by supporting a local charity, Chess. Parish links are excellent and pupils take part in events including carol singing and entertaining residents of the local retirement home, Chelmer Lodge. Links with the Catholic secondary school to which many pupils transfer are very good. Pupils are thoughtful, courteous, care for their school and each other. They are able to apply aspects of Jesus' life and teaching to their own lives and understand that a sense of service is part of being a member of a Catholic community. They also value the sense of friendship and belonging created within the school.

Pupils respond positively to opportunities to lead and participate in the school's collective worship. They are eager to take part in class and liturgical assemblies as well as a wide range of devotions including Eucharistic Adoration, May and Corpus Christi processions, and the Rosary. There have been retreat days for Years 5 and 6. During the inspection pupils were observed leading liturgies in their classrooms using prayers they had written. Pupils are able to pray in different ways and at different times. They use scripture, the traditional prayers of the church, reflection and their own prayers. There are regular whole school Masses and celebrations to which parents and parishioners are invited as well as Reconciliation services with individual confession in Advent and Lent. Classes attend the parish Mass each week on a rota basis. The Worship team and Year 6 prefects assist in whole school assemblies and hymn practice. Parish links are very strong and many pupils participate in Sunday Mass as servers, readers, offertory and choir.

Pastoral care and chaplaincy are very good and given a high priority by staff and governors who work closely together to promote the spiritual development of pupils and the Catholic life of the community. The school chaplain visits frequently and is well known to pupils. Time is set aside at staff meetings to share pastoral concerns about children and families. A counsellor from Brentwood Catholic Children's Society works with pupils and families when needed. The extended school provision, The Ark, is available at no charge for families in need of pastoral care. Pupils spoken to said they feel safe, well cared for and know where to go when they need support. They said they are listened to and encouraged to help each other. Parents said they value the care given to their children, good communication with staff and the quality of education. One parent wrote, 'Our school celebrates Catholicism and contributes greatly to our children's knowledge about religion and love for Jesus and Mary, Mother of Our Lord.'

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

School leaders and governors are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. The headteacher supported by senior staff demonstrates excellent leadership of the school through the way she promotes the provision for its Catholic life. She has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development which she shares with the whole school community. She completed an MA in Catholic School leadership prior to taking up her headship. Governors, chaplain and parish priest support her in this and are committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. The development of Catholic life is seen as central to all that happens and there is a strong commitment both to improve in all aspects of education and to provide high quality care for pupils. Together the headteacher and subject leader have a very good knowledge of areas for development in religious education and are well placed to support colleagues. All staff are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and improve their skills through meetings and attendance at diocesan led training.

The headteacher and subject leader monitor religious education by means of lesson observations, work scrutiny and joint planning which is followed by feedback to individual teachers. They also monitor classroom displays and end of topic assessments. They have good links with local deanery schools to moderate assessments and share good practice. They produce an annual religious education action plan which is reviewed termly by staff and governors leading to a clear understanding of current developments. There are regular sessions for staff development to ensure teachers are secure and confident in their delivery of the 'Come and See' religious education programme. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and five of them have the CCRS or equivalent qualification. Teaching assistants who play a key role in the school are included in planning meetings.

The experienced Chair of Governors has a very good understanding of strengths and areas for development. She ensures all governors are well informed about the life of the school through the headteacher's report, meetings with subject leaders and frequent visits. The parish priest and chaplain also play a key role in the life of the school and give effective support through teaching opportunities and the wider Catholic life. Governors have an excellent understanding of their role and are well placed to challenge and support. They effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's provision through attendance at assemblies, subject leadership team meetings as well as informal conversations with pupils and parents. Attendance at 'Away' days for teachers and governors indicate a high level of commitment to the Church's mission in education.

Leaders ensure that the school is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. Diversity is celebrated and pupils respect other faiths which are taught well. Leaders ensure pupils have a good understanding of the diversity of belief in modern life linked to British values. Pupils are given very good opportunities to develop a sense of service and show compassion for others through charitable fund raising and involvement in the local community. Opportunities for spiritual development ensure that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences and link them to the life and teachings of Jesus. Parents are invited to many school events and are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress through regular meetings and reports. Curriculum information letters and the 'Wednesday Word' enables parents to support their children's faith journey. However, a number of parents are unclear about the role of homework in religious education.

Provision

Grade 1

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is very good. During the inspection a variety of teaching styles were observed and lessons were good or outstanding. Teaching is very well planned with clear learning intentions and an interesting range of activities. These include drama, role play, 'hot seating' and debate. High quality resources including class sets of bibles are used effectively to ensure pupils are familiar with scripture. In all classes observed pupils worked with interest and made good progress. Teachers respond very well to pupils' comments and take opportunities to develop understanding. Higher order questioning was a feature of lessons observed. The good use of teaching assistants is a strength of the school. Marking is positive, interactive and includes suggestions of ways to improve. Assessment, planning and tracking support the learning and progress of all groups of pupils. Any underachievement is quickly addressed by additional support.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is excellent. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to the subject. This is demonstrated by the budget devoted to it and the current level of resources. The study of the lives of the four house saints are enabling pupils to increase their knowledge of qualities valued by the Church. Vibrant religious education displays around the school emphasise the centrality of faith to the work of the community. The 'Come and See' programme is enhanced by 'Journey in Love,' cross curricular links and use of Cafod resources. The curriculum enables pupils to become aware of their responsibility for each other and their environment. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development. Music also contributes very well to the religious education curriculum and Catholic life of the school. The support given to families through the 'Ark' which includes a breakfast club and other extra-curricular activities gives a strong sense of community to the school. There is every indication that current very good standards are likely to be maintained or improved.

Collective worship and prayer at Our Lady Immaculate is outstanding and central to the life of the school. Assemblies and liturgies contribute greatly to the spiritual development of pupils. They regularly begin

with the school prayer and mission statement and often include visual presentations, bible readings drama, singing and music. During the inspection the headteacher, chaplain and Worship team led a powerful whole school assembly on the subject of prayer. Pupils were attentive and responsive throughout and singing, supported by the school choir, was exceptional. Pupils are also involved in collective worship in their classrooms and are given opportunities for personal reflection. They welcome opportunities to plan and lead liturgies. Each classroom has a prayer focus with religious artefacts and display boards which include key religious vocabulary and children's work. Masses and age appropriate liturgies are celebrated in school and church throughout the year. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to many celebrations. The parish priest and chaplain visit frequently and supports the school through Masses and liturgies as well as offering pastoral care. There are also very strong parish links through sacramental programmes and pupils' involvement in Sunday Mass.

The inspector would like to express her thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.