



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

Local Authority: Redbridge

Unique Reference Number: 102846

Inspection Date: 26th June 2012

Reporting Inspectors: Mr Derek Kelly
Mrs Maureen Cosgrave

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: 3 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 465
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous Inspection: April 2008

School Address:
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Ilford
Essex IG1 4AS
Tel. No. 020 8590 5223
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Chair of Governors: Mr Bill Whiston
Headteacher: Mrs Helen Brown

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 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

**St Aidan's Catholic Primary School
Benton Road
Ilford
Essex
IG1 4AS**

Head Teacher: Mrs Helen Brown

Date of Inspection: 26th June 2012

Description of the School:

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided Catholic school situated in the London Borough of Redbridge and in the Diocese of Brentwood. It is a larger than average size primary school. It admits pupils aged 3 to 11 years, 65% of the children are baptised Catholics with the remainder from other Christian denominations and other faith groups. The majority of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school serves a diverse population from the three parishes of St Cedd, St Teresa and SS Peter and Paul. The school has gained a number of awards including National Healthy School Status, Activemark, Artsmark and ICT mark.

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 eleven lessons.
- Scrutiny of pupils' written work.
- Participation in two assemblies and a class Mass
- Meetings with the Headteacher, the Religious Education Leader, the Vice Chair of Governors, members of the governing body, the Parish Priest of the Parish of St Cedd, parents and pupils.
- Observations of R.E. Displays in the Classrooms and around the school

What the School does well:

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School is good in its effectiveness as a Catholic school and displays some outstanding features. The headteacher and governors provide strong leadership to the school's Catholic life and ensure pupils of all cultures, faiths and backgrounds are challenged to develop spiritually, morally and ethically. The dedicated headteacher has a clear vision and high expectations, which she effectively shares with all the staff and pupils. Guided by the School Mission Statement: *'Together, we enjoy learning, achieving, sharing and praying. Let Jesus' love shine through in everything we do.'*; the whole school community work together to create a safe, stimulating and prayerful learning environment which has a direct impact on the personal well-being and educational success of the pupils. 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 family community provided by the school. The parents and carers appreciate the sense of belonging to the school which is encouraged by very good communication systems and invitations to attend assemblies and Mass in school. The excellent partnership with home and local parishes nourishes provision and makes the school a supportive and inclusive community which promotes mutual respect for other faiths and cultures.

Religious Education (R.E.) is central to the mission of the school. The R.E. curriculum is good and based on the 'Here I Am' Religious Education Programme, recommended by the Bishop of the Diocese; it is fully implemented in all Key Stages. The school meets both the national and diocesan requirements for the allocation of curriculum time for taught R.E. Work done in personal, social and health education (PSHE) complements the R.E. curriculum, whilst provision for Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) is comprehensive and the school has implemented the Diocesan Sex Education programme, 'Journey in Love'.

The majority of lessons observed were good or better. The pupils benefit from good teaching in religious education and therefore make good progress.

Teachers plan their lessons carefully with clear learning intentions which are shared with pupils. Teachers display a secure understanding of the 'Here I Am' Religious Education Programme and have a coherent expectation of outcomes. In the best lessons a good range of teaching strategies were used, so that lessons were lively and pupils were engaged. For example, in the lessons observed, talk partners and drama were used to good effect, as were picture prompts, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) through the use of PowerPoint presentations, which featured videos of a few teachers sharing their own experiences of special places. This made the lessons interesting and encouraged pupil participation through discussion. In other lessons iPads were used highly effectively for pupils to respond to the task set by the teacher on the class blog. Teachers also made good use of questioning to ask their Teaching Assistants about their special places, in order to model questioning to the children, so that pupils could extend their thinking and encouraged them to use of key vocabulary to formulate questions for one another. The pupils' written work is regularly marked. The best examples contain both praise and guidance on the way to make progress.

Assessment in R.E. is a high priority and the school uses focussed assessment opportunities at the conclusion of each of 'Here I Am' topics, which informs the school of pupils' progress. A tracking system is being used to provide more information about groups of pupils' attainment, so that curriculum planning can be developed further to increase the level of challenge for pupils.

The leadership and management of Religious Education by the R.E Strategy Team, which comprises of the headteacher, R.E. Leader and middle leaders, is a strength because it ensures standards are maintained and planned improvements are implemented. As a result, the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

R.E. displays and artefacts, in the classrooms support the pupils learning and enhance opportunities for prayer and reflection. Each classroom has a beautiful focal point for prayer highlighting the liturgical season with a coloured drape, placed at child level, which is well used to support personal reflection. Resources for the study of other world faiths are also appropriate and a variety of visitors of other faith groups, from within the school community come to explain their faith traditions to the pupils.

The School Mission Statement: '***Let Jesus' love shine through in everything we do***', underpins all that is done within and beyond the school community. The pupils willingly undertake a number of responsible roles, such as; Prefects, Head Girl & Boy, House Captains, Sports Captains, Play Leaders, Liturgy Group Leaders, Peer Mediators and representatives of the House Forum. This reflects the school's commitment to nurturing each person as valuable and to encouraging personal endeavour. The House Forum is proud of its achievement of purchasing new playground equipment, which benefits all pupils. In discussions with inspectors, the 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 or peer mediators can assist them.

Relationships in the school are positive and pupils are generally courteous, respectful and friendly towards adults and each other. Overall, pupils' behaviour is good. Pastoral care is very good because it is based on personal knowledge of pupils' needs.

Prayer and reflection is central to the life of the school with many opportunities for prayer offered throughout the day. All R.E. lessons include a time for prayerful reflection and this is extremely well embedded in the school. Teachers create a calm atmosphere for pupils to reflect on their spiritual development and learning. The Iona Room is used extremely effectively to develop pupils' spirituality and prayer life. A virtual 'Iona Room' accessed via the school's website enables members of the school community to leave prayers and messages for special intentions which significantly enhances this provision.

Provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school is outstanding because pupils have a reverent approach to their faith and show respect for other faiths. Collective worship is well planned to reflect community celebrations, significant events and the liturgical year. Music is a liturgical strength of the school, as observed in the assemblies attended by inspectors, with pupils using their instrumental and vocal abilities effectively to enhance worship. The inspection took place during the preparations for the London Olympic Games, so there was a particular focus on sport, talents, team work and excellence in the assemblies, with pupils being encouraged to reflect upon their talents and achievements, for the benefit of others.

The Catholic ethos of the school permeates every aspect of the community. The Catholic life of the school is subscribed to by all the stakeholders – Governors, the headteacher and her leadership team, staff, pupils and their parents and carers. Governors of the school are very dedicated and supportive of everything the school does; they have a clear idea of its strengths and provide suitable challenge to the leadership of the school.

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School values links with parents and carers who are involved with their children's learning and on receiving regular curriculum information, support them at home. One parent commented that; "What they do here is to teach children to live their faith, not just learn about it."

There is a proactive St Aidan's Friends Association which organises social and fundraising events, such as the Summer Fete, to strengthen the school community and contribute to supporting pupils' learning by providing funds to purchase iPads.

There are close links with the Parish of St Cedd and the Parish Priest, who is also a governor, is a regular and welcome visitor to the school. Class Mass is celebrated weekly and parents and carers of all faith backgrounds are invited to attend and are keen to accept the invitation. Pupils are given the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent from priests from the three local parishes, who also offer an annual concelebrated Mass for those children who have celebrated their First Holy Communion during the year. The school actively supports the sacramental preparation programme offered in the local parishes, through relevant topics from the 'Here I Am' R.E. Programme.

Contributions to the wider community are through fund raising for charities, which are selected by the House Forum, such as; CAFOD, Save the Children, World Wildlife Fund and Children in Need. The school choir sings at the Brentwood Diocesan Christmas concert and at the First Holy Communion Mass in the local parish. Links have been made with St Francis Hospice and the school supports the Mary's Meals Backpack project. International links have been developed with a Catholic school in Canada and a community school in America.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. They pray with confidence and readily take up the invitation for spontaneous prayer. Pupils have a well-developed sense of responsibility, respect for those from other faiths and cultural backgrounds and demonstrate a mature understanding of the needs of others.

What needs to be improved?

- To develop rigour within data analysis of pupils' attainment and progress in Religious Education in order to improve outcomes for pupils.
- To challenge more able pupils through further development of differentiation in lesson planning.
- To improve the consistency of teaching so that all R.E. lessons are good or better, in order to improve outcomes for pupils.

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

Overall, St Aidan's Catholic Primary School is a good Catholic School with some outstanding features. It prepares its pupils well, so that they gain mutual respect for other faiths and cultures in the local community, which supports pupils in their transition to the local secondary schools.