



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary School

URN 115163

LEA: Essex

Inspection Dates: 22nd March 2007

Reporting Inspectors: Mrs. Beth Peel and Ms. Colette Dawson

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: 393
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous Inspection: June 2002

School Address:
Little Wheatley Chase,
Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 9EH
Tel. No. 01268 785741
Fax No. 01268 785167
Chair of Governors: Mr. J. Sinclair
Headteacher: Mr. J. F. O'Brien

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

**Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary School,
Little Wheatley Chase,
Rayleigh,
Essex,
SS6 9EH**

Head Teacher: Mr. J. F. O'Brien

Date of Inspection: 22nd March 2007

Description of the School:

Our Lady of Ransom Primary School is a voluntary aided Catholic school situated in the County of Essex and under the Trusteeship of the Diocese of Brentwood. It is a large primary school located in the outskirts of the town of Rayleigh and in a rural setting. The school was founded by the Sisters of Mercy who no longer live on site but maintain strong links with the school. The school serves the three parishes of Our Lady of Ransom, Rayleigh, St Teresa's, Rochford and Our Lady of Good Counsel, Wickford.

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' work.
- Meetings with the Head Teacher, the Deputy Head teacher who is also the R.E. Subject Leader, the Chair of Governors and the School Council.
- Participation in a prayer group in the Chapel and a Holy Week Assembly in the school hall.
- Observations of R.E. Displays in the Class rooms and around the school.

What the School does well:

Our Lady of Ransom is an outstanding Catholic School which displays many strengths. It is firmly committed to developing its Catholic identity under the inspirational and outstanding leadership of its Head Teacher who is very well supported by his Deputy and Leadership team, committed Governors, highly motivated Staff, Pupils and the Priests from the three parishes.

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. 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. 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 is a clear assessment focus for each of the **'Here I Am'** topics which gives excellent evidence of **'Relate'** knowledge and understanding. Positive feedback is given to the pupils and this enables them to make progress.

The leadership and management of R.E. by the R.E. Subject Leader, who is also the Deputy Headteacher is outstanding, she is well supported by the Head teacher. 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 teacher assistants.

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 local parishes, are all strengths of Our Lady of Ransom School. There is a prayer group which meet regularly and is supported by two teacher assistants. There is a 'Rosary Club' and an active Junior Legion of Mary. The annual May Procession is a tradition which is participated in and respected by the whole school community. The liturgical seasons, especially those of Advent and Christmas and Lent and Easter, are high points in the School's calendar. The Holy Week Assembly which the Inspectors attended during the day of the Inspection was outstanding. It was a prayerful and reflective occasion focussing on the Last Supper, the Agony in the Garden, the arrest of Jesus and his subsequent Trial. The children who presented the Assembly did so with outstanding devotion and dignity.

Our Lady of Ransom School promotes an outstanding and tangible Catholic ethos. This is subscribed to by all the stakeholders – Governors, the Head Teacher and his 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. The emphasis on community cohesion is an outstanding strength of the school.

Displays and artefacts in R.E. and the 'Prayer Focus', in the classrooms and around the School, are outstanding.

Our Lady of Ransom Primary 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 Parents Association which is dedicated to providing enjoyable social and fundraising events. The Ofsted Report (November 2006) highlighted the 'very successful partnership the school maintains with its parents' and 'the strong bonds between home, school and church' as major strengths of the school. The Section 48 inspectors fully endorse these judgements. The governors of the school are very dedicated, hardworking and supportive of everything the school does. The Leadership by the Chair of Governors and school governance in general are both outstanding and major strengths of the school.

Pupils are given every opportunity to become responsible citizens. Our Lady of Ransom School participates in the Annual Diocesan Citizenship Awards which takes place in May. 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 within the school community.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is an outstanding strength of the School. This was recognised by its recent Ofsted report and the section 48 inspectors wholeheartedly support this judgement. The Convent Chapel and building which is shared with the Brentwood Catholic Children's Society and the school grounds and surrounding countryside greatly enhance the spiritual dimension of Our Lady of Ransom School.

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, Our Lady of Ransom Primary School is an outstanding Catholic School which displays many strengths. It 'remains rooted in the Mercy vision and principles instilled here first by the founding Sisters of Mercy, the pioneers and our first Trustees.' (SEF/DP 2007). It prepares its pupils so that they transfer to their Secondary 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 Headteacher and his Leadership Team and to the valued support and expertise of his staff and governors.