



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: St Francis' Catholic Primary School

Local Authority: Essex

Unique Reference Number: 115194

Inspection Date: 8th December 2011

Reporting Inspectors: Dr Michael Sutherland-Harper and
Sr Jude Groden

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: 211
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: June 18, 2007

School Address:
Gilchrist Way
Braintree, Essex
CM7 2SY
Tel. No. 01376 320440
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Chair of Governors: Mr Julian Lyndon-Smith
Headteacher: Mrs Kathy Maguire-Egan

Introduction:

The Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education (Schools) Act 2005 by two 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 Francis' Catholic Primary School
Gilchrist Way
Braintree
Essex
CM7 2SY

Head Teacher: Mrs Kathy Maguire-Evan

Date of Inspection: 8th December 2011

Description of the School:

St Francis' Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided Catholic school situated a short distance from Braintree town centre in the county of Essex and in the diocese of Brentwood. The school is a slightly smaller than average-sized one form entry school. The school serves the Catholic parish of Our Lady Queen of Peace.

Record of Evidence Base:

Two Diocesan 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 seven lessons.
- Participation in an assembly.
- Scrutiny of pupils' written work.
- Meetings with the Headteacher, Head of Religious Education (R.E.), Governor responsible for R.E., Parish Priest, staff and the pupils.
- Observations of R.E. displays in the classrooms and around the school.

What the School does well:

St Francis' Catholic Primary School is a good Catholic school with outstanding features. The school places great emphasis on the importance of the individual in an inclusive community: 'Each and every one of us is unique and an expression of the love of God.' The school has plans to revisit its mission statement to make it even more child-friendly. The sense of individual value was reinforced by discussion with parents and carers at the start of the school day. They felt that the ethos of the school is what makes it different from other schools and report that their children are happy and settled in a school with waiting lists for each cohort. Community cohesion is a strength because the school has a well informed understanding of the community it serves. Meaningful and vibrant display from the moment visitors enter the front door of the school underlines the importance of the outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development offered by the school. Pupils are very caring of each other and enjoy good relationships with their teachers and other adults who work with them. As a result of these relationships, teaching and learning are good. The headteacher works tirelessly to promote the Catholic life of the school and is well supported in this work by governors and the highly-respected parish priest.

Religious Education (R.E.) is a key element of the school's work. The R.E. curriculum is based on the 'Here I Am' Religious Education programme of study, recommended by the Bishop of the Diocese; the programme is well implemented and regularly reviewed so that a range of effective resources and approaches, such as a pupil pretending to be one of the shepherds at Bethlehem, engage pupils with learning. Careful planning and good monitoring of progress ensure effective coverage of the R.E. curriculum and go hand in hand with a whole school focus on the importance of personal prayer and the liturgy, although the focus on St. Francis as the school's patron saint and on the Virgin Mary on one of her feast days could be extended. Teachers make good use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to enhance delivery of the R.E. curriculum.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Good lessons, with outstanding use of pupil voice and skilled questioning in the best classes, engage pupils and ensure steady progress. Lessons are delivered at an appropriate level and take account of pupils'

previous understanding. Pupils are ably supported by good and focused support staff. Pupils also support each other in lessons, listen respectfully when someone else is speaking and are reverent in their moments of prayer and reflection. Regular and thorough assessment procedures are in evidence across the school. Books are thoroughly marked but do not always indicate areas for further development of skills when work is consistently good so that it can reach the highest levels. Good use of praise encourages further efforts. Behaviour in classes and throughout the school is good. The R.E. Co-ordinator's thoughtful approach to the development of her subject and of fellow staff has reinforced the role of religious education at the heart of the school. The displays and resources in the classrooms are of a good quality and support pupils' learning as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Each class has an R.E. display board, usually linked to the current R.E. topic and featuring children's work. There is an intentions board for all to use in the hall as well as a family prayer board and a focus point, some very well developed, in each classroom. Prayer is central to the life of the school. Prayers are offered regularly during the day, including during the lunchtime 3 Rs sessions on respect, reflection and the rosary, which are helping to develop pupil voice. R.E. lessons include time for reflection and calm as the candle is lit. Corridor displays highlight celebrations and school events, helping to reinforce the sense of community.

The school meets both the national and diocesan requirements for the allocation of curriculum time for taught R.E.

Leadership and management are good with strong support from governors and the parish priest. The capable headteacher has a well thought out vision of where she wants to take her school and is working closely with the Head of R.E. to implement a clear structure for whole school improvement. This close collaboration means that the school has very good capacity for further improvement. Children also have good opportunities to lead, for example, as playground buddies and in a very articulate school council. The school enjoys good relationships with its surrounding community and works hard to raise funds for charity and a linked church mission in Uganda.

What needs to be improved?

- **Continue work with staff and pupils to embed structured assessment procedures which enable everyone to make outstanding progress.**
- **Increase opportunities for pupil voice in lessons and share the outstanding practice found in the best lessons.**
- **Continue to develop the liturgical life of the school and finalise the review of the mission statement.**

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

St Francis' Catholic Primary School is a good and improving Catholic school with outstanding features. Its Catholic ethos is readily apparent. The school prepares its pupils well so that they make a seamless transition into the school, even when arriving other

than at the usual times, and are able to deal equally well when they progress to secondary school.