



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: Our Lady of Ransom Primary School

LEA: Essex

Inspection Date: 21st March 2016

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: 408
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: 7th July 2010

School Address:
Little Wheatley Chase
Rayleigh
Essex
SS6 9EH

Tel. No. 01268 785741
Headteacher: Mr P. Parascandolo
Chair of Governors: Mr P. Cowdrey

Information about the school

Our Lady of Ransom is a voluntary aided two form entry Catholic primary school in Rayleigh in the county of Essex and part of the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves three parishes: Our Lady of Ransom Rayleigh; Our Lady of Good Counsel Wickford; St Pius X Hockley. There are currently 408 pupils aged 4-11 on roll of whom 78% are Catholics. There is a below average number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is around the national average. A small number of pupils are eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

Our Lady of Ransom is an outstanding Catholic school with many very good features. Opportunities for prayer and worship, pupils' spiritual and moral development and leadership at all levels are excellent. Outcomes for pupils, the quality of teaching and the provision for Catholic education are good and improving. Pastoral care is very good and shared by all members of the school community. Relationships are excellent and pupils feel well cared for and supported in their learning. Parents appreciate the Catholic ethos of the school and the good standard of communication. Pupils' standards of attainment are good and by the end of Key Stage 2 meet diocesan expectations.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The school has a very good capacity for sustained improvement. Since the last inspection in 2010 the school has embedded the religious education programme 'Come and See' which has led to improvements in teaching and learning. After a period of instability and change the headteacher has put in place a number of initiatives to move the school forward including establishing a religious education team led by a subject leader. Regular monitoring of teaching, planning and workbooks is leading to good outcomes for all pupils. Tracking of pupil progress has ensured that groups who need support are quickly identified and support strategies put in place. The school gives a high profile to religious education and has excellent systems to share good practice and support new teachers.

The senior leadership team and governors have a clear vision for the Catholicity of the school and the central place of prayer, worship and religious education. Senior staff are very good role models and all teachers are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and improve their skills through in-service meetings and attendance at diocesan led training. Eight teachers have the CCRS qualification.

The current leadership has an excellent capacity to maintain effectiveness. The headteacher shows outstanding leadership of a Catholic community through his focus on religious education, prayer and worship in which he is well supported by his staff. Governors have a wide range of expertise and many visit frequently and are involved in the life of the school. The religious education subject leader and her team are implementing a comprehensive improvement plan which is leading to good outcomes for all pupils. They are well placed to support colleagues and have attended diocesan training to improve their knowledge and skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement the areas identified in the religious education improvement plan.
- Devise a questionnaire to enable parents to give more detailed views about religious education and the Catholic life of the school.
- Review the Mission Statement to ensure all pupils have a better knowledge and understanding of it.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Attainment and progress in religious education are good. Lessons observed during the inspection were at least good and pupils worked with interest. All groups are well supported and make good progress. Behaviour for learning is very good enabling pupils to make sustained progress. Pupils say they enjoy religious education and are eager to participate in the wide range of activities which form part of the lessons. They are keen to achieve well and have a good understanding of religious concepts. They also have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and abilities. Workbooks are very well presented, show progress year on year and indicate good coverage of the curriculum. The best examples include developmental marking which lets pupils see the next steps in their learning and how to improve. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards of attainment meet diocesan expectations.

Pupils make an excellent 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 School Council and as playground friends. Several local, national and international charities are supported over the year including Cafod, Brentwood Catholic Children's Society and Little Havens Hospice. They also have links with Anchor House, a local hostel which helps homeless people. Pupils show respect for adults and each other. Behaviour is excellent and pupils value the sense of community created within the school.

Pupils have many opportunities to lead prayer and worship. Collective worship is intrinsic to the life of the school and is at the heart of every school celebration. School leaders ensure that the Church's liturgical year with its seasons and symbols are celebrated in a way appropriate for the understanding of the pupils. As a result, children respond with respect and reverence to opportunities to develop their faith journey. There are regular assemblies which involve children in planning and leading worship. Pupils understand prayer as a time of reflection and are learning the traditional prayers of the Church including saying the Angelus in each class at noon. During the inspection pupils were following the Stations of the Cross during Holy Week when each class prepares a station for the whole school which was witnessed with attention and reverence. Pupils are able to apply aspects of Jesus' life and teaching to their own lives. A weekly worship group for older pupils gives an additional experience of prayer. Pupils are also given opportunities to write their own prayers, several examples of which were seen during the inspection.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

The headteacher supported by senior staff demonstrates excellent leadership of the school through the way he promotes the provision for the Catholic life of the school and is bringing about improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. He communicates a clear Catholic vision to the whole community which is affirmed by staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. He has developed a system of self-evaluation which is detailed, accurate and identifies areas for improvement. Along with senior leaders he monitors religious education by means of lesson observations, work scrutiny and joint planning which is followed by feedback to individual teachers. There is currently a very strong focus on tracking, planning and assessment. The school has put in place strategies to give further challenge to the ablest children as well as to support all groups. Staff development is very good and includes teaching assistants who play a key role in the school.

Governors work closely with senior leadership and have a good understanding of strengths and areas for development. They are well informed about the life of the school through the headteacher's report and frequent monitoring visits. The link governor is familiar with assessment in religious education and comes in frequently to liaise with the religious education team. The parish priest from Our Lady of Ransom who is also a governor, visits to plan masses and liturgies as well as Reconciliation services in Advent and Lent. He also visits classrooms and acts as an extra learning resource. There are good links with all three parishes and school premises are used for sacramental preparation for parents and pupils from Our Lady of Ransom parish. Governors are closely involved in all aspects of the religious life of the school and are in a good position to help to shape its direction through challenge and support. They have engaged in diocesan training which has enabled them to evaluate provision and implement new initiatives.

Leaders ensure that the school is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. Diversity is celebrated and pupils are taught to respect other faiths. Pupils are given opportunities to develop a sense of service and show compassion for others through charitable fund raising. Provision for spiritual development ensures that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences in the light of faith. There are good links with the local community through sporting and music events. Parents are invited to many school events and are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress through termly meetings. An annual 'Family Day' which includes an open air Mass is an opportunity for parents, grandparents and members of the parishes to celebrate together. Parents appreciate the good level of contact with the school and support it through membership of an active Parents' Association.

Provision

Grade 2

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. During the inspection, lessons observed were good or better. Lessons are planned with clear learning intentions and an interesting range of activities. The school has made an investment in new resources and pupils respond well and appreciate the wider range of activities to which this has given rise. In all classes observed pupils work very well and make good progress. Teachers respond well to pupils' comments and take every opportunity to develop understanding. They have good subject knowledge and use a range of teaching styles and strategies to ensure all pupils are engaged and interested. Very good support by teaching assistants enables all groups of pupils to make progress. Marking is positive and the best examples include suggestions of ways to improve. Good assessment, planning and tracking supports the learning and progress of all groups of pupils.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is also good. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The headteacher gives the subject a central place in the life of the school and this is demonstrated by the budget devoted to it and the good quality of resources. Religious education displays around the school emphasise the centrality of faith to the work of the community and the importance given to prayer and worship. 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. Pupils are taught about other faiths and there are plans for them to visit local places of worship to extend their knowledge of the local community. The support given to families through extra-curricular activities gives a strong sense of community to the school. There is every indication that current standards are likely to be maintained or improved

Provision for prayer and worship at Our Lady of Ransom is outstanding. Assemblies and liturgies are very well planned and contribute to pupils' spiritual development. They often include visual presentations, bible readings, drama, singing and music. Pupils are involved in collective worship in their classrooms and are given opportunities for personal reflection and meditation. There are regular class masses which take place in the adjacent Convent chapel. There is also a Rosary group for pupils in May and October which is very well attended. The environment is conducive to prayer and reflection with displays in the hall which emphasise the Catholic life of the school. Each classroom has an attractive prayer focus with religious artefacts and display boards which include children's work. Pupils help to plan, lead and contribute to the masses and age appropriate liturgies which are celebrated in school throughout the year. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to many celebrations and attendance is very good. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and know where to go when they need support. Pastoral care is excellent and given a high priority by staff and governors who work closely together. Pupils say they value being in a friendly environment where they are listened to and encouraged to help each other.

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.