



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Inspection Report



Name of School: St Ursula's Infant School

LEA: Havering

Inspection Date: 30th November 2016

Reporting Inspector: Pamela Brannigan

This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of School: Infant
School Category: Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils: 3 - 7
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 210
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: 01/11/2011

School Address:
Straight Road
Harold Hill
Essex
RM3 7JS

Tel. No. 01708 345200
Headteacher: Mrs S. Birtles
Chair of Governors: Mr R. Fagbenro

Information about the school

St Ursula's Catholic Infant School is two form entry with nursery in Harold Hill in the London borough of Havering and part of the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parish of St Dominic's, Harold Hill with a few pupils coming from farther afield. There are currently 210 pupils aged 3-7 on roll. The proportion of Catholic pupils is 70%. The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups with 43% speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is around the national average although the majority of children start school with skills below those expected for their age in many areas of learning. The school supports pupils and families by the provision of breakfast and after school clubs as well as employing a home/school support worker.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Ursula's is an outstanding Catholic school. The provision for Catholic education is very good with opportunities for spiritual and moral development interwoven through religious education and the wider curriculum. Pupils are given many opportunities to understand what it means to be part of a Catholic community through opportunities to show responsibility and charitable fund raising. Leaders are excellent role models who set high expectations for pupils both in and out of class. Governors are experienced, well informed and well placed to challenge and support. Pastoral care is given a high priority by all members of the school community at every level. Relationships within the school are very good and both pupils and parents appreciate opportunities offered to develop a range of interests through extra-curricular activities. Parents welcome the high standard of religious education, the Catholicity of the school and the way their children's prayer life is supported and developed. Pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 are in line with diocesan expectations.

The school has a very good capacity for sustained improvement and has put in place systems to ensure its self-evaluation is accurate. The last inspection in 2011 identified no major areas for development other than those in the school improvement plan. Since then standards in religious education have risen due to careful planning and monitoring by the headteacher and subject leader. Moderation meetings are held regularly to enable teachers to share judgements with each other. The school gives a high profile to religious education and has put in place strategies to share good practice and support new teachers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement the areas identified in the religious education development plan especially those linked to teaching and learning to raise standards to those of the best.
- Continue to mentor and support new members of staff.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Attainment in religious education is good and progression is very good. From a low benchmark on their entry to Early Years Reception classes, pupils make very good progress so that by the time they reach the end of Year 2 attainment reaches diocesan expectations. All lessons observed during the inspection were good and pupils worked with interest and commitment. Pupils spoken to said they like religious education and enjoy a variety of activities during the lessons. The Nursery class were introduced to the Advent wreath in an unending circle like Jesus' love for us. Key vocabulary was carefully introduced and reinforced in the Reception classes where the Annunciation was supported by a wide range of cross-curricular activities. In Year 1 classes pupils developed this knowledge with differentiated tasks and a focus on signs and symbols. Year 2 pupils learned how to observe works of art which supported their understanding of the Annunciation. There were good links to scripture through Isaiah's prophecies. All pupils work well together and have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age. Older pupils in Year 2 are also able to apply religious ideas to their own lives. Pupils with additional needs are well supported through differentiated activities and the help of their class teachers and teaching assistants. Workbooks are very well presented, show coverage of the curriculum and indicate good progress made by all groups.

Pupils make a very good contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The mission statement, 'With Jesus as our special friend we learn and play together. We respect and care for ourselves, others and our school' is on prominent display in every classroom and well known by all members of the community. Pupils respond very well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider world through charitable fund raising and participation in local events. They are keen to take on responsibilities including as school councillors and as playground friends. They value the sense of friendship and belonging created within the school. As they develop, pupils 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.

Prayer and worship are central to school life. Pupils respond very positively to opportunities to develop their faith journey. They are given many opportunities to participate in assemblies and collective worship. Each class begins the day with prayers and reflections and every child has a turn as class 'prayer leader.' In addition, each class has two religious education monitors who are learning to take responsibility for aspects of celebrations. All classes have an attractive prayer table which is used as a focus for worship as well as a display board which includes religious vocabulary and pupils' work. The Church's liturgical year with its seasons and celebrations are leading to a good understanding of the links with the life of Christ. Older classes attend Thursday morning mass on a rota basis which supports pupils' understanding of the links between home, school and parish. Celebration services at the end of 'Come and See' topics are attended by parents and the local parish priest. Pupils also lead Nativity, Carol and Easter celebrations as well as Reconciliation services during Advent and Lent. Pupils are developing the ability to pray in different ways and at different times. They are learning the traditional prayers of the Church as well as writing their own, many examples of which were seen during the inspection.

Pastoral care is very good and shared by all members of staff and governors who work closely together to promote the spiritual development of pupils and the Catholic life of the community. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and know that all members of staff are there to help if they need support. Pupils value their school and all it offers. They know they are listened to and encouraged to help each other. The school has engaged a home/school support worker to help vulnerable families as well as making provision for certain pupils during holiday periods. Responses to a recent questionnaire show that parents think very highly of the school and the care given to their children. They praise the quality of religious education, the support given to their children's prayer life and the commitment and approachability of staff.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

Leadership is outstanding. The headteacher and her team demonstrate excellent leadership of the school by their commitment to the Church's mission in education and the way they promote a clear Catholic vision to the whole community. This is affirmed by staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. The School Improvement Plan gives priority to Catholic Life and religious education. The current system of self-evaluation is well evidenced, detailed and accurate. The headteacher and subject leader have a very good knowledge of areas for development in religious education and are well placed to support colleagues.

The current leadership has a very good capacity to maintain effectiveness. The experienced headteacher shows outstanding leadership of the school through the way she ensures that self-evaluation gives staff and governors an accurate understanding of itself as a Catholic community. The leadership team has a clear focus on prayer and worship and the parish priest from St Dominic's supports them in this and is a frequent visitor to the school. He has been the link governor for religious education for a number of years and is very well placed to inform governors of current provision and areas for development. Effective systems are in place to develop and strengthen initiatives which lead to good outcomes for all groups of pupils.

Senior leaders monitor religious education by means of lesson observations, work scrutiny and joint planning which is followed by feedback to individual teachers. The subject leader for religious education has produced a school wide data base to enable detailed tracking of progress across each key stage. She has introduced this system to other Catholic schools in Havering deanery and provides them with support and training. Detailed planning and assessment across the year groups has ensured all pupils achieve well. Much emphasis is placed on staff development, the subject leader is undertaking an MA

in Catholic School leadership, two teachers have the CCRS qualification and all new teachers attend diocesan training. Teaching assistants who play a key role in the school attend staff in-service sessions.

Governors are actively involved in the life of the school through working closely with senior leadership and frequent visits. They have a very good understanding of strengths and areas for development, and a wide range of expertise. They are well informed about the life of the school through the headteacher's report and their own observations. Governors and staff attend an annual school development day to evaluate provision and plan future improvements. They also review the School Development Plan at every meeting and access diocesan training to enable them to fulfil their role effectively.

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 which are taught well. There are very good links with other schools including the junior school on the same site to which almost all pupils transfer at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils are given good opportunities to develop a sense of service 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. Parents are invited to many school events and are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress. They appreciate the good level of contact with the school which includes curriculum information evenings, newsletters and the 'Wednesday Word' which enables them to support their children's faith journey. There are also excellent links with the local parish.

Provision

Grade 1

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is very good. During the inspection lessons observed were good or better. They are planned carefully with clear learning intentions and a varied range of activities. Teachers incorporate religious education into literacy lessons which is leading to very good coverage of the curriculum. Pupils benefit from the high profile given throughout the school to religious education. In all classes observed pupils were engaged and made good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and respond well to pupils' comments as they take every opportunity to develop understanding. Very good support by teaching assistants enables all groups of pupils to make progress. Marking is positive and oral comments enable pupils to identify next steps in their learning. Very good monitoring, assessment, planning and tracking supports the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is outstanding. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The headteacher gives religious education a central place in the life of the school and this is demonstrated by the budget devoted to it and the current level of resources. The school has made a major investment in technology which is enhancing religious education lessons through the use of video clips and as a focus for reflection. Attractive religious education displays around the school emphasise the centrality of faith to the community. 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. In conversations pupils referred to the message of Jesus when they talked about charitable fund raising. The support given to families through extra-curricular activities gives a strong sense of community to the school. There is every indication that current high standards are likely to be maintained or improved.

Provision for prayer and worship at St Ursula's is excellent. Assemblies and liturgies are well planned and contribute greatly to pupils' spiritual development. They often include visual presentations, bible readings drama, singing and music. Celebrations include Nativity and Easter assemblies. In addition, pupils have Reconciliation services in Lent and Advent. During the inspection an assembly on St Andrew's Day led by the headteacher enabled pupils to understand the role of a follower of Jesus. Class candles with photos of every child were brought in by the prayer monitors with great reverence lit and placed near the Advent focus. All children were attentive, interested and joined in with prayers which included the 'Our Father' and children's own prayers. Pupils are involved in collective worship several times a day in their classrooms and are given opportunities for personal reflection. Each classroom has a very attractive prayer focus with religious artefacts and display boards which include children's work. It is anticipated that a newly developed prayer garden will enhance opportunities for informal prayer and reflection. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to many celebrations and attendance is very

high. During Advent pupils take home a 'travelling crib' to enable families to share the Christmas story and pray together. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their knowledge of Catholic traditions through the collective worship provision in the school.

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.