



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: St Francis Catholic Primary School

Unique Reference Number: 102770

Inspection Date: 18 March 2013

**Reporting Inspectors: Dr. Michael Sutherland-Harper and
Mr. Patrick Moloney**

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: 457
Appropriate Authority: The governing body
Date of previous inspection:**

**School Address: Maryland Park
Stratford
London
E15 1HB**

**Tel. No.: 020 8534 0476
Fax No.: 020 8555 3068
Chair of Governors: Terry Sweeney
Headteachers (Acting): Christopher Mabey
Gael Hicks**

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, Headteachers, 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
Maryland Park
Stratford
London E15 1HB**

Head Teachers (Acting): Christopher Mabey and Gael Hicks

Date of Inspection: 18 March 2013

Description of the School:

St Francis Catholic Primary School is a much larger than average-sized Catholic primary school. There are two classes in each year group from Nursery through to Year 6. The school is situated in the London borough of Newham and in the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parish of St Francis of Assisi in Stratford. Two acting headteachers are at present in charge of the school.

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 10 lessons.
- Participation in an assembly.
- Scrutiny of pupils' written work.
- Meetings with the acting headteachers, the Head of Religious Education (R.E.), an assistant parish priest, two parish sisters, a governor and a group of pupils.
- Observations of R.E. displays in the classrooms and around the school.

St Francis Catholic primary school is at the heart of its local community, which it welcomes through its doors, as part of the mission statement, to 'explore our special gifts and love and follow Jesus'. Franciscan religious sisters and the assistant parish priest, who spoke to inspectors during their visit, mentioned the vibrant role played by the pupils in the local parish. As the assistant priest said, 'you can really hear them singing when they come to the church'. Indeed, glorious singing from pupils and staff in an assembly about the new pope was a highlight of the inspection and emphasized the way in which the learning community is now coming together after a period of some change. The ethos of the school is clear from the tone of the entrance foyer and in displays around the school but the notion of pupils' learning as being at the heart of the school could be reinforced by more prominent examples of pupils' best work to show the standards for which the school is aiming.

St Francis Catholic primary school is a school where pupils' achievement and learning in Religious Education (R.E.) require improvement. In a number of lessons, expectations of the progress that pupils will make in the subject are too low and are not adjusted as pupils meet the original targets set. Pupils have some opportunities to extend their thinking but the range of tasks set do not always relate directly to pupils' everyday experience of their faith. As a result, their understanding is sometimes less well developed than it could be when questioning does not begin from what pupils have already encountered in their faith journey. Pupils are respectful of each other and of adults in R.E. lessons and sit quietly even when a few have finished work before others. Pupils are aware of their responsibilities for each other and make efforts to support them, as talk partners in classrooms and as playground leaders outside of lessons.

Pupils' learning and progress also requires improvement because pupils do not always respond to the comments some teachers make in their R.E. books and which aim to help them improve. Consequently, individual progress is sometimes slower than it might be if pupils acted on these suggestions. In other lessons, comments do not show pupils what they need to do next to improve. The school is currently working from the **Here I Am** programme and plans to implement the new **Come and See** programme of study in

September 2013. Resources have been identified and purchased and in-service training for all staff is planned. Because teachers do not always check pupils' starting points before they begin a section of work, starting points for lessons may not match pupils' level of understanding and therefore result in less engagement than might otherwise be expected. Pupils value opportunities to reflect on their learning but these are sometimes limited when the teacher does the reflecting and summing up for them. A scrutiny of pupils' books revealed that progress over time is inconsistent in line with the variation in expectations.

The quality of teaching in R.E. requires improvement. The school meets the national and diocesan requirements for the allocation of curriculum time for taught R.E. Teachers have good subject knowledge. However, in some lessons, teachers talk for too long so opportunities for independent pupil work, especially for the more able, are limited. The use of teaching assistants, a valuable resource, is inconsistent from lesson to lesson. Expectations of the quality of presentation vary and there is some unfinished work in books. Opportunities for extended writing to show understanding vary across year groups, including in the upper years. The match of work to pupil abilities is too general in R.E. lesson plans, including for those with special educational needs.

The acting headteachers have focused on reviewing and developing provision for the Catholic life of the school and have begun to implement their ideas. It is too early to see their full impact but the standards being set are apparent. Provision in R.E. is an area which requires further improvement. At present, action plans are centred on a mixture of practical and academic tasks such as purchasing resources and reviewing assessment but these need to be prioritized in order of importance. Further work on assessment and target setting to increase progress rates in R.E. is needed along with more regular review of the rate of progress. To do this requires better, more frequent collection and analysis of results term on term and year on year than presently occurs. At the moment, standards are inconsistent in R.E. lessons and best practice is not sufficiently identified and shared to improve provision rapidly. Monitoring of provision for R.E. is not frequent enough at present. Evidence to support levels awarded is present in some monitoring sheets but not in others. R.E. does not feature prominently in the school development plan to reinforce the position which R.E. is intended to have at the heart of the school's work and ethos. The governor who met with the inspection team during the inspection felt that there is still work to be done so that teaching and learning become better.

Pupils take part in services in the local parish as readers, altar servers and participants. They are supportive of various charities and keen to do what they can to speak up for their school. The sisters who spoke to the inspectors mentioned some exciting Easter plays to come. Art work helps to reinforce understanding as do well-delivered assemblies. However, staff are not at present fully involved in leading delivery of assemblies, including by class groups. Prayer corners are well maintained. Pupils participate reverently in prayers but prayers in class are as often led by adults as by pupils and little spontaneous prayer about things pupils might feel they wanted to pray for was witnessed. When invited to reflect or comment, pupils are capable of some remarkable

insights, an area which could be further developed by more time for pupil-led activities in R.E. lessons.

What needs to be improved in R.E.?

- **Develop expectations of what pupils can achieve in R.E. lessons against clear targets**
- **Improve the quality of marking and guidance in showing pupils the way forward in R.E.**
- **Carry out more regular collection and analysis of data to identify any possible underachievement at an earlier stage**
- **Increase opportunities for teachers, pupils and classes to lead whole school assemblies as an expression of their faith and what they have learned in R.E.**
- **Implement the planned Come & See Programme.**

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

St Francis Catholic primary school is an inclusive community where pupils are known and valued as individuals. Links with parents and carers, who are deeply committed to the school, are growing but teaching, assessment and expectations in R.E. are at present inconsistent and require improvement.