



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Inspection Report

Name of School: St Pius X Primary School

LEA: Essex

Inspection Date: 9th May 2018

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: 208
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: March 2013

School Address:
Tennyson Road,
Chelmsford,
Essex,
CM1 4HY

Tel. No. 01245 354875
Headteacher: Mrs S. Derbyshire
Chair of Governors: Mr J. Milligan

Information about the school

St Pius X Catholic Primary School is one form entry in Chelmsford Essex and part of the diocese of Brentwood. It serves the parish of The Blessed Sacrament Chelmsford from which most Catholic pupils come. There are currently 208 pupils aged 4-11 on roll. The proportion of Catholic pupils is almost 56% with the rest coming from other Christian denominations, other faiths or none. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a smaller number coming from a range of ethnic minority groups. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average as is the number of pupils who receive the pupil premium. The school is currently preparing to become part of a multi-academy trust.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

St Pius X is a good school with several outstanding areas including the leadership of the new headteacher who is also the subject leader for religious education. The Catholic ethos of the school is strong and permeates all areas. The school is well led, with a clear sense of purpose and direction and has very good provision for prayer and collective worship. Outcomes for pupils are good and improving and the capacity for sustained improvement is also good. Opportunities for spiritual and moral development are interwoven through religious education, prayer and an understanding of what it means to be part of a Catholic community. Senior leaders are excellent role models and have put in place initiatives linked to the Catholic life of the school as well as teaching, learning, assessment and monitoring. Pastoral care is very good and shared by all members of the school community. Relationships are good and pupils feel well cared for and appreciate opportunities given to be involved in all aspects of school life. Parents welcome the Catholicity of the school; appreciate the good communication with staff and the wide range of extra-curricular activities available for pupils. Standards of attainment are in line with diocesan expectations.

The school has a very good capacity for sustained improvement. The last inspection in 2013. identified areas for development linked to consistency in marking and the checking of pupil understanding. It also identified the need for a system to track pupil progress throughout the school. Marking is not yet consistent across the school although the new headteacher in her role as religious education subject leader has included it in her action plan which is comprehensive and currently being implemented. She gives a high profile to religious education and has effective strategies to share good practice and support staff.

The senior leadership team have a clear vision for the Catholicity of the school and the central place of prayer, worship and religious education. All staff are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and improve their skills through meetings and attendance at diocesan led training. Governors are experienced, make frequent visits to the school and are well placed to challenge and support. They attend diocesan training to enable them to fulfil their role in relation to the school's Catholic foundation. Links with the local parish are very good with parishioners invited to many school events which are advertised in the newsletter. This is reciprocal with the school supporting the parish when possible. Both school and parish join together for May and Corpus Christi processions and devotions including Stations of the Cross.

The current leadership has an excellent capacity to maintain effectiveness. The new headteacher shows outstanding leadership of a Catholic community. She has a clear focus on prayer and worship in which she is well supported by all staff. Systems are in place to develop and strengthen initiatives which lead to good outcomes for all pupils. As religious education subject leader the headteacher is well placed to support colleagues.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement the areas identified in the religious education action plan.
- Ensure pupils have more opportunities to plan and lead worship.
- Put in place additional support for staff as they implement assessment without levels.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 2

Attainment and progress in religious education are good. Lessons observed during the inspection were generally good or better and pupils worked with interest and commitment. Pupils spoken to said they enjoy their religious education lessons and appreciate the wide range of tasks involved. They are eager to participate in activities and work well together whether in groups or pairs. All pupils are given a bible for use in school at the end of Year 3 which enables them to have immediate access to scripture. They have a fair knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and are able to integrate religious ideas into their own lives. Workbooks are well presented, show coverage of the curriculum and indicate good progress made by all groups. Standards of attainment are in line with diocesan expectations.

Pupils make a very good 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 through a 'Faith in Action' philosophy. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities including membership of the School Council, prefects and religious education leaders. They have opportunities to understand how gospel values permeate the life of the school through following 'The St Pius Way' a code of conduct prominently displayed. Pupils spoken to said they were asked their opinions through the 'Pupil Voice' and could make suggestions about activities to support the charities chosen by the school. Recently these have included Brentwood Catholic Children's Society, a local hospice and Cafod. Pupils also enjoy representing the school through singing in the choir and a range of sporting events. Pupils show respect for adults and each other. Behaviour is very good and pupils value the sense of community and belonging created within the school.

Prayer and worship are central to school life. Pupils respond very positively to opportunities to develop their faith journey. They are eager to take part in assemblies and would welcome more opportunities to plan and lead acts of worship. They have an age appropriate understanding of the liturgical year, its seasons and celebrations. Pupils are developing the ability to pray in different ways and at different times. They use scripture, the traditional prayers of the church, meditation and their own prayers, examples of which were seen during the inspection. They are familiar with the Angelus and the Rosary. Year 6 pupils write prayers which are used each week in the whole school liturgy. There are beginning and end of term Masses as well as class Masses each year to which families and parishioners are invited. Religious education leaders help prepare for school Masses, read prayers and collect numbers for communion. During Masses pupils lead the prayers, read and act as altar servers. Older pupils spoken to 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.

Pastoral care is very good and given a high priority by 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 where to go when they need support. Extra support is given through Brentwood Catholic Children's Society for pupils who need it. Pupils spoken to said they valued being in a friendly school where they are listened to and encouraged to help each other. Parents value the care given to their children, the quality of education and the approachability of staff.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

The new headteacher supported by her deputy demonstrates outstanding leadership of the school through the way she promotes the provision for its Catholic life. She has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development which she shares with the whole school community. Governors support her in this and are committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. The development of Catholic life is seen as central to all that happens and gospel values underpin all decision making. There is a strong commitment both to improve in all aspects of education and to provide high quality care for pupils and support for parents. Together the headteacher and her deputy have a very good knowledge of areas for development in religious education and are well placed to support colleagues.

Senior leaders monitor 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

consistency of good practice relating to high standards in teaching, marking and assessment. The school has put in place strategies to give further challenge to the ablest pupils through differentiated tasks and 'challenges', some of which were seen during the inspection. Leaders support staff development which includes teaching assistants who play a key role in the school. Teachers are encouraged to improve their subject knowledge and although only one has the CCRS qualification another is about to embark on the course.

Governors who have a wide range of skills 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, meetings with subject leaders, staff and visits. They work with leadership to prepare the school improvement plan which always has religious education as a priority. The parish priest from Blessed Sacrament is link governor for religious education and assists with monitoring the subject through 'book looks' and visits to lessons. He meets the subject leader regularly to evaluate and plan for improvements as well as acting as an additional teaching resource as required. There are currently plans to have an in-service day for staff and governors at Aylesford Priory to develop understanding and commitment to the Church's mission in education.

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 well taught. Pupils are given good opportunities to develop a sense of service and show compassion for others 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.

Provision

Grade 2

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. Lessons are planned with clear learning intentions and an interesting range of activities. The school has made a major investment in resources and pupils benefit from the wide range of activities involved in religious education lessons. In the classes observed pupils worked well and made progress. Teachers generally respond well to pupils' comments and take opportunities to develop understanding. This was evident in an excellent Year 2 lesson where the teacher explored the nature of the 'Good news' with pupils, linked it to the headteacher's assembly about the coming of the Holy Spirit and encouraged a discussion during which higher order questioning was a feature. Good support by teaching assistants is evident and enables all groups of pupils to make progress. In some year groups marking is positive, interactive and includes suggestions of ways to improve. This should be extended over all Key Stage 2 classes. Peer review with subject leaders from two other Catholic schools ensure that assessments are accurate and are used to support teachers' planning.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is good. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to the subject. The religious education programme 'Come and See' is embedded and supported by 'Journey in Love' and visiting speakers. The headteacher ensures new teachers are well supported in delivering the religious education curriculum. She gives the subject 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. Religious education displays around the school emphasise the importance of faith to the everyday life of 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. The support given to families through a breakfast club and a range of extra-curricular activities gives a strong sense of community to the school. There is every indication that current good standards are likely to be maintained or improved.

Provision for prayer and worship at St Pius X is very good. Assemblies and liturgies are very well planned and contribute greatly to pupils' spiritual development. They often include scripture, pupils' prayers, music and role play. During the inspection the headteacher led an Ascension Day assembly with a focus on revealing God's love to the world. Pupils were attentive and interested as she compared the important tasks given to the disciples with the devotion of birds in her garden as they cared for their eggs as they hatched into chicks. Two religious education leaders read from St Luke's gospel and included prayers written by pupils who were all respectful and prayerful. Classroom

collective worship includes opportunities for meditation and personal reflection. Each classroom has a prayer focus with religious artefacts and display boards which include children's work. Masses and age appropriate liturgies are celebrated in school throughout the year. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to many celebrations. Pupils visit the church occasionally develop their knowledge of Catholic traditions. Parish links are very good with some pupils acting as altar servers at Sunday Mass.

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.