



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Inspection Report



Name of School: St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

LEA: Essex

Inspection Date: 12th October 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: 372
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: 1st May 2011

School Address:
Burney Drive
Loughton
Essex
IG10 2DY

Tel. No. 0208 508 6315

Executive Headteacher: Mrs B. Laraway
Chair of Governors: Mr F. Maguire

Information about the school

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School is a two form entry school in Loughton in the county of Essex and part of the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parishes of Loughton, The Immaculate Conception, Epping and St Thomas More and St Edward, Waltham Abbey. There are currently 372 pupils aged 4-11 on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British Heritage with 24% coming from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Around 85% of pupils are Catholics with the remainder coming from other Christian denominations or other faiths. 30% of the teachers are Catholics and four have the CCRS qualification. The proportion of pupils with special needs is around the national average. At present the school has an executive headteacher with a seconded deputy head from another Catholic school acting as Head of School and religious education subject leader.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

St John Fisher is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. These include the quality of the prayer and collective worship provided by the school. The Catholic ethos is evident in the daily life of the school with prayer and worship being central to its work. Pupils are given opportunities for spiritual and moral development through the curriculum and the wider life of the school. The quality of pupils' learning and progress in religious education is good as are the standards of attainment. There is regular monitoring of teaching, learning, and assessment. An IEB has recently been put in place which includes some governors of long standing who know the school well and offer a good level of support. Pastoral care is good and shared by the local parish priest and all staff. Relationships within the school and with the local parish are very good and pupils feel well cared for and supported in their learning. Parents are generally happy with religious education and the Catholic life of the school.

The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement. The last inspection in 2011 affirmed the areas for development identified by the school which were linked to assessment, teaching and learning in religious education. Since then the senior leadership of the school has changed and some members are recent appointments. The executive headteacher has a clear vision for future development which is shared with whole school community. The head of school who is also religious education subject leader has produced a comprehensive action plan to sustain effectiveness and put in place further improvements. She has also given guidance to teachers on classroom worship which involves pupils in using their own prayers as well as the traditional prayers of the Church. Regular, rigorous monitoring is ensuring that teaching is relevant and appropriate to children's needs.

The quality of self-evaluation is good. The school documentation is accurate and gives a comprehensive analysis of the Catholic life of the school and religious education. There are strategies in place to share good practice and support new teachers. The curriculum which follows the 'Come and See' programme enables pupils to make connections between faith and their own lives. Staff are encouraged to improve their skills through training and embarking on the CCRS course. There are also good links with other diocesan primary schools through in-service sessions and staff meetings. All new teachers are given a moderation file to assist in assessment and levelling pupils' work.

The current leadership has a very good capacity to maintain effectiveness. The executive headteacher shows very good leadership of a Catholic community and is well supported by the head of school who is also subject leader. Members of the IEB have a wide range of expertise and a good knowledge of the everyday life of the school. Board members visit frequently and are involved in staff appointments as well as liaising with subject leaders. Systems are in place to develop and strengthen initiatives which are leading to good outcomes for all pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue the process of improvement of teaching and learning in religious education with particular emphasis on staff development.
- Continue to establish developmental marking across the school to enable pupils to know how to improve their work.

- As identified by the school, ensure pupils have additional opportunities to plan and lead worship.
- Provide additional information about curriculum religious education for parents to enable them to support children in their faith journey.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 2

Pupil achievement and progress in religious education are good. All pupils spoken to said they enjoy religious education and the range of activities involved. Pupils observed during the inspection worked well together and were keen to achieve. They have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and abilities. Lessons observed were well planned with a range of cross curricular activities, especially in Early Years and Key Stage 1 where a 'Prayer Bear' is sent home for the weekend to enable families to participate in their child's faith journey. In Key Stage 2 pupils used scripture with confidence in all lessons observed. A Year 5 lesson on the role of an apostle put the 'Acts of the Apostles' in its historical context which enabled pupils to understand the challenges faced by the first disciples. Across the school workbooks are very well presented and show pupils' progress and coverage of the curriculum. Marking is positive and there are some comments to help pupils make the 'next steps' in their learning. Other faiths are taught well and include visits to a local synagogue.

Pupils make a very good contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They respond well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. Last year pupils chose Macmillan Cancer Relief to support and they have continued to do so this year. They also support Cafod and the Christmas Shoebox Appeal and have a good understanding of the work of these charities. Pupils are able to link this with the life and teachings of Jesus. Pupils are given responsibilities to support the life of the school as school council members, house captains and playground buddies. There are also plans to involve year 6 pupils in a 'Mini disciples' group. There are very good links with the local parish with regular school Masses when pupils act as altar servers, readers and offertory takers. The parish priest who provides pastoral support for staff and pupils comes in every week and acts as an additional teaching resource. There are good links with Brentwood diocese through the Rainbows Support programme when staff were trained how to help pupils with loss and bereavement. Pupils show consideration and respect for adults and each other. Behaviour is very good and pupils value the sense of security, friendship and community created within the school.

Prayer and collective worship are an integral part of school life. Pupils understand the importance of prayer and participate readily in class and assemblies. The cycle of celebrations reflects the Church's liturgical year and enables pupils to understand how faith links to everyday experiences. They respond positively to opportunities to develop their faith journey through reflective prayer. Pupils are involved in the preparation for Masses and assemblies and have a good grasp of religious terminology appropriate to their ages. They learn the traditional prayers of the Church as well as writing their own prayers, many of which were seen during the inspection. There is a Rosary group in May and October and the Angelus is said three times a week in each class. There are plans to give pupils more responsibility in planning and leading class assemblies. Preparation for the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation in Year 3 are parish based with support from the school. Pupils are aware of the support available to them and feel safe, cared for and know where to go when they need help. Parents value the care given to their children and the good level of communication with staff. Responses to a questionnaire were positive with many appreciative comments including, 'The school has a wonderful way of helping children grow in their spiritual journey. This is evident as you walk through the school.'

By the end of Key Stage 2 standards of attainment meet diocesan expectations and all groups make good progress. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of individuals and groups of pupils. School leadership gives religious education the same importance as other core subjects and uses staff meeting time and in-service sessions to support teachers.

Leaders and managers

Grade 2

The executive headteacher and head of school demonstrate very good leadership of the school through the way they promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school. They communicate a clear Catholic vision to the whole community and are supported in this by staff and the IEB who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. The Catholicity of

the school is evident in displays around the school and in the classroom prayer areas. During the inspection a Key Stage 2 Mass in school involved pupils as servers and readers. Singing was excellent and all pupils participated with enthusiasm. The local parish priest took the opportunity to explore the symbolism of aspects of the Mass with pupils. This is a regular feature of school life and parents and families are invited to attend.

The members of the IEB have a long standing knowledge and understanding of the school and are well informed about its life through the headteacher's report and visits to school events as well as meetings with senior leaders. Along with the headteacher they monitor the school's provision for prayer and worship as well as religious education. They have accessed training provided by the diocese which has enabled them to evaluate aspects of the religious life of the school and to challenge and support effectively.

As subject leader, the head of school has produced a targeted action plan for religious education and is well placed to support new teachers. Along with the executive headteacher she monitors religious education through workbook scrutiny, observing teaching and evaluating outcomes. She gives feedback after lesson observations resulting in improvements in teaching and learning. She has led training sessions for staff to help them ensure that all pupils achieve well. She has also introduced a new system for recording data to enable progress in religious education across the school to be tracked accurately. Assessment is in place and tasks enable pupils to demonstrate their knowledge of the relevant concepts. Leaders support staff development and teachers are encouraged to undertake further training.

School leaders ensure that St John Fisher School is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. The school offers a range of extra-curricular activities as well as a Breakfast Club and participates in local community events. There are good links with other diocesan schools including the Catholic secondary school to which most pupils transfer at the end of key Stage 2. Visitors and visits are arranged to support understanding of other faiths and cultures. Provision for spiritual development ensures that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences. Parents and are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress through regular meetings although a number would welcome more information about the religious education curriculum.

Provision

Grade 2

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. During the inspection, lessons observed were good or better. Pupils are given a good start in Early Years which is built upon as they progress through the school. Lessons are planned with clear learning intentions and a range of activities. All groups of pupils make good progress and behaviour for learning is also good. Teachers respond well to pupils' comments and take opportunities to extend knowledge and develop understanding. In most year groups well differentiated tasks enable pupils to work with enthusiasm and interest. Good support by teaching assistants is a feature of many lessons. Marking is positive and there are suggestions of ways to improve. There is every indication that current good standards are likely to be maintained.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is good. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The programme 'Come and See' has been implemented throughout the school and is now embedded. It is enhanced by participation in the Deanery Mass and there are plans for a Retreat Day for older pupils. There are good quality resources including class sets of Bibles which are used to give pupils regular access to scripture. Religious education displays around the school emphasise the importance of faith to the work of the school. 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.

Provision for prayer and worship at St John Fisher is outstanding. Assemblies and liturgies are well planned and contribute to pupils' spiritual development. They 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. Each classroom has a prayer focus with religious artefacts and a display board which often includes children's work. Feast day Masses are celebrated throughout the year and the traditions of the Church are explored with pupils. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to many celebrations and pupils visit the local church to lead a Carol Service at

Christmas. The parish priest supports the school through Masses and classroom visits. Pupils have the opportunity to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation at Advent and Easter.

The school is constantly seeking to develop practice to improve outcomes for pupils. The subject leader is reviewing assessment procedures to enable pupils to demonstrate their understanding of religious concepts more clearly. Tracking of pupils' progress is beginning to provide a clear picture of progress in both key stages. There is evidence that good outcomes for pupils are likely to be maintained or improved as the school consolidates and builds on current good practice in all areas.

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.