



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Inspection Report



Name of School: St Clare's Catholic Primary School

LEA: Essex

Inspection Date: 26th April 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: 309
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: 20th November 2012

School Address:
Cloes Lane
Clacton-on-Sea
Essex
CO16 8AG

Tel. No. 01255 425344
Executive Headteacher: Mrs B. Harris
Chair of Governors: Mr S. Fenning

Information about the school

St Clare's Catholic Primary School is 1.5 form entry situated on the outskirts of Clacton on Sea, Essex in the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parishes of Our Lady of Light Clacton on Sea, All Saints Jaywick and All Souls Holland. There are 309 pupils on roll aged 4 -11, 65% of whom are Catholic. Pupils come from mainly White British backgrounds. Three pupils have statements of Special Educational needs. After an unsettled period, the school converted to academy status and now has a stable staff, 46% of whom are Catholic. The school is overseen by an executive headteacher from another Catholic school although the Head of School is responsible for its day to day running. The two schools work closely together and within the Deanery group.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

St Clare's is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. These include the quality of collective worship, the extent to which pupils benefit from the Catholic life of the school and the way school leadership promotes the provision for Catholic life and plans improvements for pupils. The quality and progress of pupils' learning is good as is the impact of teaching on their achievement. The Head of School together with the governors and the subject leader who is also the deputy headteacher are very effective in identifying areas for development and putting in place strategies to achieve good outcomes for all groups of pupils. Prayer is an integral part of the school's daily life and is central to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. Pupils behave very well, work hard and thrive within a strong Christian community where they feel loved, well supported and safe. The school works closely with all stakeholders including parents. Teaching is good. During the course of their time in the school, pupils make good progress.

The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement. The last inspection in 2012 identified a number of areas which needed addressing linked to teaching, learning, monitoring and leadership. Since then the school has had a change of leadership and put in place systems which are leading to improvements in all areas.

Governors and senior leadership are committed to improving St Clare's through putting in place a culture of high expectations and rigorous monitoring for teaching and learning. Governors are now given sufficient information to enable them to challenge and support effectively. The Catholic dimension of the school is strengthened through good parish links and opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship. The Catholic mission of the school is explicit and understood by the entire school community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement the areas for development identified in the school's self-evaluation and religious education action plan.
- Ensure that pupils are given opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge through extended writing.
- Develop a portfolio of moderated work to support staff as they assess pupils' achievement of the religious education levels of attainment.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 2

Pupils achieve well in religious education. All groups are well supported and attain expected standards. Pupils spoken to said they enjoy religious education especially when taught through art, drama, role play and music. They show interest and are keen to succeed. Pupils are encouraged to work independently and understand how to improve. By the end of Key Stage 2 they generally achieve diocesan expectations.

The quality of pupils' learning and progress in religious education is good. Their behaviour for learning is of a high standard both in class and around the school. The school's tracking system quickly identifies any underachievement which is addressed through extra support for the pupils concerned. Very good resources, good teaching and support from teaching assistants is leading to good outcomes for all groups. Pupils spoken to showed an understanding of the Catholic faith appropriate to their ages and were able to talk about it with confidence. A recent innovation of an evaluation book for each pupil is enabling them to reflect on their learning in an informal way.

The extent to which pupils benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. They make a very positive contribution to all aspects of school life including the regular programme of Masses, daily assemblies, special celebrations and charity fundraising. Pupils are ready to help others and feel valued, safe and well supported. They are keen to take on leadership roles including play leaders, buddies and membership of the school council. Pupils value the extra-curricular activities offered by the school. Pupils can talk about the main events in the Church's year and know how the life and teachings of Jesus affects their responsibilities to each other. All pupils spoken to knew the school mission statement. Chaplaincy is regarded as a shared responsibility by all staff. Pupils spoken to were confident about where to go if they need help or advice. In addition, a counsellor is available for vulnerable pupils and their families. Pupils have a good understanding of their responsibilities to those beyond the school community and are involved in charity work throughout the year. Pupils fund raise enthusiastically for CAFOD and other charities and understand the theology underpinning this commitment. They also participate in the Joint Schools Christmas Concert which raises money for a range of charities.

The provision for collective worship at St Clare's is outstanding. Prayer is central to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. They know the traditional prayers of the Church appropriate for their age group and are able to write their own prayers, many of which were seen during the inspection. A recently formed Liturgy group takes responsibility for choosing and leading prayers as well as participation in Gospel assemblies. During collective worship and reflections observed, pupils were attentive and responsive. All classrooms have an area which provides a focus point for prayer and reflection. Pupils are encouraged to compose their own prayers in class and at home. Pupils sing well and music enhances celebrations.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

The leadership of the school's Catholic life is outstanding. The executive head teacher and Head of School have a clear vision for the school which is shared and owned by all members of the school community. All the staff clearly promote the Catholic life of the school and are good role models for pupils. The Catholic mission of the school is part of its daily life and within the wider community. There is a range of religious education related displays and bible passages in classes and around the school which are linked to topic themes, the liturgical year or particular events.

The new subject leader who is also deputy headteacher ensures religious education is regarded as a core subject. He uses in-service education effectively to support and develop staff skills and subject knowledge. He holds monthly 'Before you begin' sessions linked to

the 'Come and See' programme to support staff as they prepare for the next topic. He has introduced 'Evaluation' books to enable pupils to reflect on their learning. Leaders also support colleagues through a programme of lesson observations and monitoring planning and workbooks.

Governors, many new to their role are well aware of their responsibilities and understand the strengths and areas for development within the school. The link governor for religious education joins the subject leader for 'book looks' and occasionally attends school council meetings. The Head of School's report gives details of current monitoring of religious education and governors' visits are also a good source of information. Governors attend parents' evenings as well as Masses and liturgies. There are regular joint meetings with staff. The parish priest from Our Lady of Light visits frequently and has a good understanding of day-to-day activities. He conducts regular 'Question and Answer' sessions for pupils and staff as well as contributing a reflection to the weekly school newsletter.

The school is well regarded by its parent body. Recent questionnaires indicated support and appreciation for every aspect of school life. Parents and carers are kept well informed about the religious education curriculum and the liturgical life of the school. They are invited to all celebrations including Masses, assemblies and liturgies.

Provision

Grade 2

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers use effective strategies to engage pupils' interest and support all learners. Regular in-service sessions support teachers in their planning and subject knowledge. Pupils are given a very good start in Early Years Foundation Stage which is built upon as pupils progress through the school. Teachers differentiate work for pupils to ensure all groups make good progress. Workbooks are well presented and show coverage of the curriculum although there is an over reliance on work sheets in some year groups. This has led to insufficient examples of extended written tasks to support assessment judgements. Marking is positive and often includes 'next steps' to enable pupils to improve their work. Good resources have been purchased in recent years and are well used.

The religious education curriculum is effective in promoting pupils' learning. At least 10% of teaching time is devoted to religious education and the curriculum is enhanced through good links with the local parish and the input of the priest. Drama is incorporated into the curriculum with role play observed in some classes. The religious education curriculum is further enriched through the school's charity work and links with the wider community.

Collective worship is very well planned and there is a variety of formal and informal opportunities for daily prayer. During the inspection the deputy headteacher and the Liturgy group led a powerful assembly on 'Pester Power' and the necessity for prayer illustrated by the parable of the widow and the unjust judge. Pupils were fully engaged and attentive. Class Masses are celebrated in school, special assemblies are held and there is a prayer garden in the school grounds where a memorial plaque for a previous parish priest has been recently installed. Parents are invited to many celebrations including Masses, Ash Wednesday services, Easter and Christmas plays, Harvest and assemblies; the school also provides a variety of clubs and enrichment activities which provide opportunities for the development of skills and interests. Achievement in and out of school is celebrated. Pupils are increasingly involved in planning and leading liturgies and assemblies. There is every indication that current standards will be maintained or improved.

The inspector would like to thank all members of the school community for the warm welcome and the hospitality extended during her visit.