



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: St Alban's Catholic Primary School

LEA: London Borough of Havering

Inspection Date: 16th June 2015

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: 209
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: 16th June 2010

School Address:
Heron Flight Avenue
Hornchurch
Essex
RM12 5LN

Tel. No. 01708 555644
Headteacher: Mrs B. Matthews
Chair of Governors: Mrs A. Palmer

Information about the school

St Alban's Catholic Primary School is one form entry in Elm Park, London Borough of Havering and part of the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parish of St Alban's in Elm Park with a few pupils coming from adjoining parishes. There are currently 209 pupils aged 4-11 on roll. The school is over subscribed. The proportion of Catholic pupils is 90%. The majority of pupils are from White British background with around 20% from Black African heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Satisfactory 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Alban's is an outstanding school with a Catholic ethos which is at the heart of all it does. Outcomes for pupils are very good as is the provision for Catholic education and the capacity for sustained improvement. 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. Leaders are excellent role models and have a clear vision for the whole school community which includes the well being of parents and families as well as initiatives linked to the Catholic life of the school. Governors are experienced and well informed. Pastoral care is given a high priority by all members of the school community at every level. Relationships within the school are excellent and pupils spoken to say they feel safe and well cared for. Both pupils and parents appreciate the many opportunities offered to develop a wide range of interests through breakfast and after school clubs as well as lunch time 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 are in line with and often exceed diocesan expectations.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

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 2010 identified no major areas for development other than those already stated by the school in its self evaluation. Since then standards in religious education have risen due to the implementation of the agreed understanding of levels of attainment which have informed lesson planning and assessment. Moderation meetings are held regularly in school and the deanery to share judgements with other Catholic schools. The school gives a high profile to religious education and has put in place strategies to share good practice and support new teachers.

The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors have a clear vision for the Catholicity of the school and the central place of prayer, worship and religious education. The headteacher ensures that all staff are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and improve their skills through staff meetings and attendance at diocesan led training. Four teachers hold the CCRS qualification and two more have other Catholic qualifications. Governors join staff for a school improvement day every year as well as attending in-service sessions where appropriate. They are dedicated, have a wide range of expertise and are fully involved in the life of the school through frequent visits and meetings with subject leaders.

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. She is very well supported by her deputy headteacher and the subject leader for religious education. Together they are well placed to support colleagues and new teachers. The leadership team has a clear focus on prayer and worship in which they are well supported by all staff and the parish priest from St Alban's who is also the link governor for religious education. Effective systems are in place to develop and strengthen initiatives which lead to good outcomes for all groups of pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to support staff in the assessment process to enable them to accurately identify levels of attainment in religious education
- Investigate an effective system of recording pupils' progress.
- Continue to develop teachers' skills in higher order questioning to give pupils more opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Both attainment and progress in religious education is outstanding. From a low base on entry to Reception pupils make very good progress year on year so that by the time they reach Year 6 attainment reaches and sometimes exceeds diocesan expectations. Most lessons observed during the inspection were good or outstanding and pupils worked with interest and commitment. Pupils spoken to said they like religious education and enjoy a wide variety of activities during the lessons. They work well together whether in groups or pairs. Pupils have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and are able to apply religious ideas to their own lives. Workbooks are well presented, show coverage of the curriculum and indicate very good progress made by all groups. Pupils show high levels of understanding of scripture, sacraments, Catholic teaching and moral issues. Behaviour is excellent and pupils are courteous and thoughtful to adults and each other.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The mission statement, 'Inspired by God's love, we celebrate our gifts as we learn and grow together. St Alban pray for us' is reviewed regularly 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 community. They are keen to take on responsibilities including membership of the School Council, Eco group, Playground Friends and as play leaders. Pupils themselves suggest the charities they wish to support and in recent years these have included Cafod, Brentwood Youth Service and Mary's Meals which is also supported by the local parish. They have a good understanding of the theology underpinning their actions and are encouraged to see themselves as part of a global community with responsibilities for other people and the environment. They value the sense of friendship 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 given many opportunities to plan and participate fully in assemblies, masses and class collective worship. Each day begins with prayers and reflections to which pupils contribute. All pupils have the opportunity to join in liturgies, Penitential and Advent services as well as Easter and Christmas celebrations. The centrality of the Church's liturgical year with its seasons and celebrations are leading to a good understanding of the links with the sacraments and life of Christ. Each class has 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. 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, many examples of which were seen during the inspection. Visits to the parish church for the Stations of the Cross enable pupils to become familiar with traditional Catholic devotions. 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.

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 respected, listened to and encouraged to help each other. Younger pupils spoke of a 'Buddy Bench' where they can wait if they need a friend and the Year5/Year 1 reading buddy system where older pupils help younger ones. Parents speak very highly of the school, the headteacher and the care given to their children. They appreciate the support the school gives to pupils through enrichment and parent curriculum workshops as well as the work of the learning mentor and the inclusion manager. They also praise the excellent quality of

education, the support given to their children's prayer life and the commitment and approachability of staff.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

Leadership at all levels is outstanding. The dedicated headteacher and her team demonstrate excellent leadership of the school by 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 headteacher has ensured that 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, deputy head and subject leader have a very good knowledge of areas for development in religious education and are very 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. The subject leader is part of the deanery moderation group who are currently compiling a portfolio of assessed work to help teachers make accurate judgements. The impact of rigorous monitoring results in high standards in religious education. There is currently a very strong focus on planning and assessment as the school consolidates the implementation of the 'Come and See' religious education programme and the updated Curriculum Directory. The school is putting in place strategies to give further challenge to all groups of pupils. Much emphasis is placed on staff development which includes teaching assistants who play a key role in the school.

Governors work closely with senior leadership and have a very good understanding of strengths and areas for development. They are very well informed about the life of the school through the headteacher's report and frequent visits. The parish priest who is also the link governor is knowledgeable and in a good position to support effectively. He acts as an additional resource in classroom religious education as well as planning masses and liturgies. Together with the subject leader he is able to give the governing body a detailed understanding of developments in religious education which, along with the headteacher's report puts governors in a good position to challenge as well as support. Governors and staff participate in an annual day where the school improvement plan is updated and resourced.

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. Islamic members of staff assist understanding of that faith through giving talks to classes. There are very good links with other schools, both deanery and local authority run, through sporting and cultural events. The subject leader participates in deanery religious education co-ordinators meetings, organising joint moderation of pupils' work and sharing good practice. Pupils are given exceptionally good opportunities to show leadership and develop a sense of service through charitable fund raising and involvement in the local and wider 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 and letters which enable them to support their children's education and faith journey. The school makes every effort to maintain and develop parish links. This helps pupils, families and parishioners to see school and parish as one community.

Provision

Grade 1

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. During the inspection most lessons observed were good or outstanding. They are planned carefully with clear learning intentions and a varied range of activities. The school has made a major investment in resources including up to date technology and sets of bibles for Key Stage 2 which has led to increased familiarity with scripture. Pupils benefit from the high profile given throughout the school to religious education lessons. 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. This is a feature of lessons throughout the school. Marking is generally positive, interactive and enables 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 programme 'Come and See' has been in place for two years and is now embedded. 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. Vibrant religious education displays around the school emphasise the centrality of faith to the work 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 school's programme of retreat days for older pupils contributes to pupils' independence and sense of worth. The support given to families through a regular coffee morning and a wide range of 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 Alban's is outstanding. Assemblies and liturgies are very well planned and contribute greatly to pupils' spiritual development. They often include visual presentations, bible readings drama, singing and music. During the inspection an assembly on the theme of 'Friendship' led by the Reception class linked the story of the Little Red Hen with Jesus calling the disciples to be his friends in a reading from St John's gospel. Older pupils helped to prepare the hall for the assembly and managed the overheads which had recorded Reception children interviewing members of the school community about friendship. Every pupil in the class participated with interest and concentration and was keen to respond to questions. Pupils are involved in collective worship several times a day in their classrooms and are given opportunities for meditation and personal reflection. Each classroom has a very attractive prayer focus with religious artefacts and display boards which include children's work. Pupils attend Mass several times a term as a class or part of a whole school Mass. They prepare for this by selecting hymns, composing bidding prayers, reading, offertory and as altar servers. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to masses, other celebrations and attendance is very high. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their knowledge of Catholic traditions through Reconciliation, Stations of the Cross and Rosary as well as links with the local parish.

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.