



## **DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD**

### **Inspection Report**



**Name of School: Holy Family Primary School**

**LEA: Essex**

**Inspection Date: 4<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

**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: 3 - 11**  
**Gender of pupils: Mixed**  
**Number on roll: 234**  
**Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body**  
**Date of previous inspection: November 2011**

**School Address:**  
**Kents Hill Road**  
**Benfleet**  
**Essex**  
**SS7 5PX**

**Tel. No. 01268 792231**  
**Headteacher: Mr P. O'Kane**  
**Chair of Governors: Mr G. Blakesley**

## Information about the school

Holy Family Catholic Primary School is one form entry in Benfleet in the county of Essex and part of the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parishes of Holy Family, Benfleet and St Thomas More Hadleigh. There are currently 234 pupils aged 3-11 on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British Heritage with a small number coming from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Almost 64% of pupils are Catholics with the remainder coming from other Christian denominations, other faiths or none. 78% of the teachers are Catholics and four have the CCRS or similar qualification. The proportion of pupils with special needs is around the national average.

### Key grades for inspection

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

### Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

**Grade 2**

Holy Family is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. These include the quality of the prayer and collective worship provided by the school and the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from its Catholic life. After a period of many staff changes including a new deputy headteacher and subject leader, the school has put in place an improvement plan which is rapidly leading to better outcomes for all pupils. 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. Pastoral care is good and shared by the local parish priest and all staff. Relationships within the school and with the local parish are 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 identified the need for the school to implement the 'Come and See' religious education programme and to promote existing and future ecology developments. Both areas have been addressed and the school expects to achieve Eco Schools Ambassador status later this year. The headteacher has a clear vision for future development which is shared with the whole school community. The new subject leader supported by the deputy headteacher has produced an 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.

The current leadership has a very good capacity to maintain effectiveness. The headteacher shows very good leadership of a Catholic community and is well supported by his deputy and subject leader. Members of the governing body have a wide range of expertise and a good knowledge of the everyday life of the school. Governors 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 to implement the religious education action plan.
- Offer additional opportunities for new staff to increase their subject knowledge.
- Revisit the school mission statement to ensure all pupils understand and are familiar with it.

## 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. In Key Stage 2 pupils are able to use scripture with confidence. A Year 5 lesson on the fruits of the Holy Spirit used St Paul's letter to the Galatians to explore the challenges faced by the early church and the principles to which the first disciples aspired. Across the school workbooks are well presented and show pupils' progress and coverage of the curriculum. The Year 6 class teacher, as RE subject leader, provides guidance on effective marking and feedback. Marking is positive and the best examples help pupils make the 'next steps' in their learning. Other faiths are taught well and include a visit to a local synagogue.

Pupils make an excellent 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 raised funds for Cafod, Basildon Women's Refuge and Mercy in Action. Currently Year 3 pupils are actively supporting a terminally ill child in their class by keeping him in touch with school activities as well as helping to send him on holiday. Discussions with pupils showed that they 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, Year 6 monitors, reading buddies and lunchtime play leaders. There are very good links with the local parishes with regular school Masses when pupils act as altar servers, readers and offertory takers. Year 6 pupils have also been trained to prepare and set up for Mass in school and there are plans to re-establish liturgy prefects to lead morning prayers. The parish priest from Holy Family provides pastoral support for staff and pupils, comes in regularly and acts as an additional teaching resource. There are good links with Brentwood Catholic Children's Society whose counsellors work with teachers on how to help pupils and families who need additional support. 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. However, they are not familiar with the school's mission statement which should be revisited to ensure pupils understand it.

Prayer and collective worship are an integral part of school life. Pupils understand the importance of prayer and participate readily. Key Stage 2 pupils are encouraged to write class assembly scripts and bidding prayers for class masses. 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. They are familiar with the Rosary and the Angelus is said each day in all Key Stage 2 classes. There are plans to give pupils more responsibility in planning and leading class assemblies. Singing is excellent and the school choir performs regularly at local and national music festivals. Preparation for the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation in Year 3 are parish based with support from the school. Reconciliation services are held in school in Advent and Lent. 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 overwhelmingly positive with many appreciative comments.

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 1

The headteacher and deputy demonstrate very good leadership of the school through the way they promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for its Catholic life. After a period of instability and many

staff changes they have put in place a rapid improvement plan for standards in religious education which is already bearing fruit. Leaders communicate a clear Catholic vision to the whole community and are supported in this by staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. Parish links are fostered by inviting parishioners to a range of school events including school and family Masses. The Catholicity of the school is evident in displays around the school and in the classroom prayer areas. During the inspection the headteacher led a whole school assembly introducing May, the month of Mary. He included scripture references to the life of Mary as well as introducing some traditional devotions including the 'Memorare' and some of Mary's many titles. All pupils participated with reverence and singing was excellent.

Many governors 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. Governors are also invited to join the school on an annual retreat day. The link governor for religious education has been involved with the school and parish for many years and is particularly well placed to monitor current developments. Governors 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.

The subject leader supported by the deputy headteacher has produced a targeted action plan for religious education and is well placed to assist new teachers. Along with the deputy headteacher she monitors religious education through workbook scrutiny, observing teaching and evaluating outcomes. They both give feedback after lesson observations resulting in improvements in teaching and learning. They have led training sessions for staff to help them ensure that all pupils achieve well through differentiated tasks and the use of 'driver' words. She has also introduced staff sessions for teaching other faiths to ensure all staff are confident in these areas. 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 Holy Family School is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. The school offers a range of extra-curricular activities as well as Breakfast and After School Clubs and participates in local community events. There are good links with other diocesan schools including the Catholic secondary schools to which some 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 carers are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress through regular meetings, weekly newsletters and their views are sought by means of questionnaires. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the provision for religious education and the way their children's' faith journey is supported. One parent wrote, 'Catholic values are embedded in every part of the school. I am proud to have my child attend.'

## **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. Teachers new to the school are well supported by leadership although some would benefit from more opportunities to increase their subject knowledge. In most year groups well differentiated tasks enable pupils to work with enthusiasm and interest. Effective support by teaching assistants is a feature of many lessons. Marking is positive and in some year groups there are detailed 'next steps' comments and suggestions of ways to improve. Once this is extended over all groups current good standards are likely to be further improved.

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 'Journey in Love' and visits from healthcare professionals. Parents are invited to participate in some of these sessions. There are good quality resources

including class sets of Bibles which are used to give pupils regular access to scripture. Other faiths are taught well and enhanced by visits to a local synagogue. 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 Holy Family 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. A 'Millennium Garden' with a willow cross provides an outdoor space for class worship and prayer. 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 Lent.

The school is constantly seeking to develop practice to improve outcomes for pupils. The subject leader is reviewing assessment procedures to prepare the school for changes envisaged later in the year. Tracking of pupils' progress is providing 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.