



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Inspection Report



Name of School: St Francis Catholic Primary School

LEA: Newham

Inspection Date: 11th May 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: 3-11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 372
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: 18th March 2013

**School Address: Maryland Park
Stratford
E15 1HB**
Tel. No. 020 8534 0476
Headteacher: Ms N. Scott
Chair of Governors: Mr N. Ely

Information about the school

St Francis Catholic Primary School is two form entry with nursery situated in Stratford in the London borough of Newham and part of the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parish of St Francis of Assisi Stratford. It is in an area of high deprivation. There are 372 pupils on roll, aged 3 – 11, 85% of whom are Catholics. Pupils come from a range of cultural backgrounds, the majority are of Black African and Caribbean heritage and 38% speak English as a second language. After a period of turbulence, the school now has strong leadership and a stable staff, 72% of whom are Catholics. The school supports families by the provision of before and after school clubs.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Francis' is now an outstanding Catholic school. After an unsettled period and many staff changes, the new head teacher together with the senior leadership team and governors are very effective in promoting the Catholic dimension of the school. Staff are very good role models for pupils. Prayer and worship are central to the school's daily life and support the spiritual and moral development of pupils. Behaviour is good and pupils work hard and thrive within a strong Christian community where they feel valued, well supported and safe. The school works closely with the local parish, parents, the diocese and the local deanery group. Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. During the course of their time in the school, pupils attain well and make good progress.

The school has a very good capacity for sustained improvement. The last inspection in 2013 identified a number of areas linked to religious education and Catholic life which required improvement. These included the quality of marking and guidance for pupils, teachers' expectations, identification of underachievement, implementation of the 'Come and See' programme and more opportunities for pupils to plan and lead assemblies. These areas have now been addressed and rapid improvement is evident in religious education and pupils' involvement in collective worship.

The headteacher, governors and senior leadership are committed to improving St Francis' still further. The Catholic dimension of the school is strengthened through support from the parish priest who is also the link governor for religious education and acts as a school chaplain. There are currently plans to revisit the school mission statement with pupils and families to ensure it is understood by the entire school community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to embed areas for development identified by the school linked to assessment and monitoring.
- Devise a questionnaire which will give parents an opportunity to comment on the provision for religious education and Catholic life.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Outcomes for pupils are very good. Achievement is good, all groups are well supported and attain expected standards. Pupils enjoy their work, concentrate well and are keen to succeed. Older pupils are taught how to work independently and how to develop and improve. Pupils spoken to said they enjoyed religious education and the wide range of activities involved in their learning. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils achieve diocesan expectations. The quality of pupils' learning and progress in religious education is also good.

Behaviour for learning is of a very high standard both in class and around the school. Pupils are actively engaged in their religious education lessons and co-operate and work well in pairs as well as individually.

The extent to which pupils benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. They value their traditions and enjoy participating in all aspects of school life. Pupils express their beliefs with confidence and are able to link the teachings of Jesus with their own lives. They value the sense of belonging and the support offered by their teachers and other members of staff. They are proud of their roles as peer mediators, play leaders, 'Mini Vinnies' and membership of the school council. Pupils enjoy the responsibilities given to them and are enthusiastic about the extra-curricular activities offered by the school. Pupils have a sense of service to the wider community and are keen fundraisers for a wide range of charities including Cafod, Brentwood Catholic Children's Society, the Shoebox Appeal and St Francis' Soup Kitchen. They also know that the teachings of Jesus underpin their responsibilities to each other in and out of school. Pupils are involved in parish life through the school choir at Masses and as readers and altar servers. The choir also entertains the parish at Christmas and on other occasions.

The school's collective worship is also outstanding. Pupils regularly plan and prepare acts of worship including their class assemblies. The prayer life of the school is central to the spiritual and moral development of pupils. They know the traditional prayers of the Church appropriate for their age group and also write their own prayers, many of which were seen during the inspection. They have a good understanding of the liturgical year with its seasons and celebrations. During collective worship observed, pupils played a leading role and were attentive and responsive. All classrooms have an area which provides a focus point for prayer and reflection at set times of the day. Music is a strength of the school and pupils' enthusiastic singing enhances celebrations and is also appreciated in the parish church.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

The leadership of the school's Catholic life is outstanding. The head teacher supported by her leadership team has a clear vision for the school which is shared by all members of the school community. She has put in place strategies which have led to rapid improvements in the provision for religious education and the Catholic life of the school. All staff support her in this and are very good role models for pupils. The Catholic mission of the school is a priority along with spiritual and moral development of pupils. Self-evaluation is accurate and reflects the rigorous monitoring and tracking which are leading to good outcomes for all groups of pupils. The range of religious education related displays in classes and around the school reflect religious topic themes, the liturgical year, particular events and specific prayers.

Leaders are experienced, enthusiastic and highly motivated to ensure religious education is regarded as a core subject. They have produced a school wide data base for religious education enabling tracking and effective resource provision. The subject leader's annual action plan for religious education is leading to high standards in teaching and learning. She is an excellent teacher who is able to demonstrate lessons or work alongside new colleagues. In-service education is used effectively to support and develop staff skills in assessment as well as developing subject knowledge. She also gives presentations to the governors to enable them to be familiar with developments in religious education. Leaders work hard to support colleagues through a programme of lesson observations and monitoring planning and workbooks.

Governors, many new to their role, are very well aware of their responsibilities and work hard to support the areas for development within the school. They join staff for an annual focus day linked to religious education and Catholic life. They visit frequently and have a good knowledge of the day to day life of the school. The parish priest from St Francis' acts as link governor for religious education and often comes in for assemblies and classroom visits. He

leads school Masses which take place in the parish church and are well attended by parents and families. The school ensures that regular monitoring visits and reports prepared for the governors enable them to fulfil their role.

The school is well regarded by its parent body. Recent questionnaires indicate a good level of support and appreciation for many aspects of school life. However, at present these do not include an opportunity for parents to comment on religious education or specific aspects of Catholic life. Parents spoken to value the good communication between school and home and the range of extra-curricular activities available including the provision of breakfast and tea time clubs which help the whole family. Parents and carers are kept well informed about religious education and the liturgical life of the school through regular newsletters and leaflets as well as homework tasks which often involve the whole family in research. Families are invited to all celebrations including class assemblies and Masses in the parish church.

Provision

Grade 1

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding due to good planning, effective questioning and lively pace. Pupils are given an excellent start in Early Years which is built on as pupils progress through the school. Assessment is leading to good examples of differentiation which is resulting in all pupils making progress. Opportunities are taken to extend pupils' understanding through discussion and imaginative activities. Resources including class sets of bibles are used well to ensure pupils are familiar with scripture. Examples seen during the inspection included study of the Sacrament of the Sick and the Ten Commandments where pupils were confident in finding bible references. Workbooks are well presented and reflect good coverage of the curriculum. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and provide good support for groups and individual pupils.

The religious education curriculum promotes pupils' learning through coverage of the 'Come and See' programme enhanced by excellent resources including the 'Wednesday Word.'. Other faiths are taught well and pupils are taken on visits to a local synagogue and mosque. The 'Year of Mercy' materials are used well and pupils are able to talk about the Corporal Acts of Mercy. The school devotes at least 10% of teaching time to religious education and the curriculum is enhanced through effective links with the local parish. Drama is also 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 its choir through praise and worship.

Collective worship is central to the life of the school and is well planned. There is a variety of formal and informal opportunities for daily prayer in class and during assemblies. Pupils experience different types of collective worship which are planned to take account of their ages and abilities. Pupils are involved in preparations for Masses which are celebrated in the local parish. Parents are invited to many celebrations including Masses, Ash Wednesday services, Easter and Christmas productions and assemblies. During Lent Reconciliation services are held and the Stations of the Cross are presented to the whole school. Achievement in school and outside of school is also celebrated with special awards.

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