



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Denominational (S48) Inspection Report

Name of School: St Clare's Catholic Primary School and St Clare's Nursery

Local Authority: Essex County Council

Inspection Date: 24 June 2022

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Angela Podmore (Lead Inspector)

This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 and 2011.

Type of School: Multi Academy Trust
School Category: Primary
Age range of pupils: 2 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 311
Appropriate Authority: Essex County Council
Date of previous inspection: April 2016

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

Tel. No. 01255 425344
Headteacher: Mrs Moira Breeze
Chair of Governors: Mr Tim Cooper

Information about the school

St Clare's is a one and a half form entry school in Clacton-on-Sea. It is part of the Rosary Trust in the Diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parish of Our Lady of Light and St Osyth. A Nursery was opened in September 2021. There are currently 311 pupils on roll of whom 31% are Catholic. There is a higher than national average number of pupils who are in receipt of Pupil Premium funding. 11% of pupils have English as an additional language. The number of pupils deemed to have Special Education Needs is in line with national averages and 3 pupils are in receipt of an Educational Health Care Plan. There are 15 teachers in the school 1 of whom has obtained the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Clare's is a warm, welcoming and caring school which provides its pupils with an outstanding Catholic education. Pupils feel safe in the school as they belong to a community which provides for them spiritually, physically and academically. Their well-being is given a high priority through excellent pastoral care which was clearly seen during the recent lockdown. All members of the school community fully recognise and appreciate that each person is a unique gift from God and everyone's talents and gifts are recognised and celebrated. Pupils are encouraged to build on their understanding of their Catholic faith and shine in the love that God has for them. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education as the school strives to ensure that they develop into confident individuals well equipped to progress into the wider world as strong independent learners and thoughtful caring individuals.

Staff are ambitious for the school and ensure that they provide pupils with an environment which is highly conducive to learning. School leaders know their school very well and ensure that self-assessment is accurate which enables the school to have excellent capacity for sustained and continuous improvement.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school commenting on its family atmosphere and reporting that all children are accepted and in turn taught to accept and treat everyone well. They say that they appreciate the 'Kind, caring staff teaching children to be kind to others' and that the 'School and staff promote good morals, caring for others through the teaching of RE and leading by example.'

Governors play an active role in the life of the school visiting regularly. They know the school very well and challenge the leadership team while providing effective support.

School leaders, under the expert guidance of the dedicated and committed headteacher, share a clear vision for the school and are excellent witnesses to the school Mission Statement. They are fully committed to St Clare's being a beacon of excellence within the wider community whilst ensuring that the Catholic identity and charism of the school and its foundations are widely celebrated. Leaders ensure that everyone in the school is fully aware and committed to the church's mission in education.

What the school should do to improve further:

- To join with deanery and/or the other Trust schools in joint moderation meetings to ensure the accuracy of teacher assessments.
- To continue to work towards increasing the proportion of Catholic pupils in the school.

The Catholic Life of the school is widely celebrated; it can be seen in a number of ways, not least in the highly positive relationships amongst all members of the school community and the care, guidance and support given to both the school and wider community, where pupils can grow, not just academically but spiritually and morally.

The school Mission Statement 'With Jesus we learn to love and love to learn' is a succinct and powerful message. It is prominently displayed around the school and in classrooms and is frequently referred to. Pupils and staff embody the Mission Statement and the core school values of Love, Respect, Honesty, Compassion and Inclusion as together they drive all actions, policies and practices in the school.

Pupils are provided with a range of opportunities to take on responsibilities. They are active on the school council and were eager to inform the inspector how much they enjoyed their role and being able to make decisions on behalf of their peers. Fund raising for those less fortunate or for particular areas of need are fully embedded in the lives of the children and the pupils spoke with great enthusiasm of cake sales and pizza sales to raise funds for such charities as Guide Dogs, CAFOD and Children in Need. They are fully aware of Catholic social teaching and take their responsibilities very seriously. The wall filled with prayers to support people in Ukraine is added testimony to their support and commitment to others. They comment that 'We don't own the world, we need to take care of it.' They are especially aware of the need to ensure that God's Garden in the centre of the playground should be a place of calm and prayer as it is a special place to remember a past parish priest and much loved deceased members of staff. Liturgy Leaders have the responsibility of leading and preparing for assemblies and other acts of worship. They fully enjoy choosing hymns, readings, prayers and being active participants in all celebrations.

Communal areas and classrooms fully reflect the Catholic identity and ethos of the school and its origins. Displays around the school are beautiful and reflect not only the universal Catholic church but the school's history as a school founded by the Franciscan sisters with St Clare as its patron saint. The school celebrates both St Clare and St Francis' feast days with Mass in school. The beautiful mindfulness colouring posters capturing Bible texts further enrich the environment. The Stations of the Cross display and the Liturgical year timeline display, designed by pupils, further enrich the environment as well as enabling pupils to become more familiar with the church's year. The Tree of Intentions shows pupils personal petitions and intentions throughout the year. It is given a prominent position in school reflecting its importance to the community.

Pupils support each other well both in class and around the school. They work well in collaborative work and support and encourage each other. They give each other time to speak and share their ideas. A pupil reported that in RE 'We learn about Jesus and God and we become a community.' They also report that 'We are a community, a family, we look after each other' and another said 'We are determined to learn' and another 'We are hardworking.'

The well-being of pupils is given high priority within the school. Pupils have access to the counselling service provided by the diocese and the new well-being hub, named in memory of a late member of staff, is a welcome additional space where pupils can seek guidance and support.

A newly opened Nursery, providing provision for children from the age of 2, enhances the profile of the school and fulfils a need within the wider community, with children being able to move seamlessly into the school on finishing their Nursery education. It is a warm, well-resourced place of learning and the Catholic ethos, which pervades the school, is in clear evidence in the Nursery. During the inspection children were planting seeds, making pictures of the world and talking about creation happily informing the inspector that God made everything.

School governors have a strong understanding of the characteristics of a Catholic school. Along with school leaders they are highly ambitious for the school.

Parents and the parish priest are very supportive of the school. Parents are kept well informed of school events through the newsletters and the school website. They are now being welcomed back into school and many of them joined the school in celebrating the Gather and Rejoice assembly which was held during the inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Grade 2

Pupils achieve well in Religious Education (RE) and their achievements are in line with those in other core subjects. From their starting points pupils make good progress as is clearly evidenced in their work books. The end of unit 'Evaluation' books are an excellent record of how they have progressed since starting the school as pupils take these books with them as they progress through the school. Pupils can clearly see how their knowledge and understanding have developed over the years and use these to show how they can move their learning onwards as a result of their experiences.

Teachers create a positive environment for learning and are now using a wider variety of strategies to enhance learning opportunities, resulting in pupils saying that they enjoy lessons. Relationships are very positive and all pupils are encouraged to offer their ideas and opinions. During one lesson pupils were preparing a hot seating activity to demonstrate their understanding of the story of Jesus curing the blind man, whilst in another, pupils were discussing pilgrimage using Lourdes as an example. Younger pupils were excitedly looking for Fair Trade products around the classroom. These pupils were able to tell the inspector, in an age appropriate way, why Fair Trade products are important for local communities. Teachers use a wide variety of resources to support learning and provide further experiences for pupils.

Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and questioning is effective in challenging pupils' thinking and developing their knowledge and understanding. The introduction of the 'Head, Heart, Cloud' strategy provides pupils with an effective reminder of the RE attainment targets and pupils use them in their oral and written work to demonstrate their learning. Additional adults are deployed well and help pupils maintain focus and attention, in the best practice they ask relevant questions to assess pupils' understanding and support learning well.

Pupils' books are well presented and clearly show the progress they are making as well as demonstrating the respect they have for the subject. Pupils are confident when talking about their learning in RE and show that they are becoming increasingly religiously literate using age appropriate vocabulary in both written and oral work. Regular marking and feedback from teachers enable pupils to build on what they already know and develop their learning. Pupil response to feedback shows that they appreciate staff comments and are keen to improve.

Pupils can reference scripture to support their ideas. In one class pupils were discussing Jesus' care for the sick and how it affects people's faith, they were able to use scripture to share ideas and also about what this meant for them.

Opportunities to study Judaism and Islam are firmly embedded and enjoyed by pupils. Lessons are supplemented by input from a local Rabbi who joins pupils via virtual links to explain his faith. A local resident from the Islamic community also visits the school to talk about her faith. Pupils comment that they really enjoy learning about other religions.

The subject leader is passionate in ensuring that RE maintains a high profile in the school and is committed to the ongoing development of the subject. Along with the equally committed Headteacher, their ambition for the subject is evident. The subject leader supports her colleagues well, delivering training to ensure that staff are confident in teaching each area of the RE curriculum as well as role modelling expectations and good practice. She encourages new teachers to participate in diocesan training events. Staff are provided with exemplars of work to support their practice and non-Catholic staff have the opportunity to observe colleagues to support their own practice.

Assessment of pupils' work is robust and occurs frequently. It is used effectively to check progress and to alert staff to potential gaps in knowledge or underachievement and so put measures in place to support pupils. Moderation takes place within school to ensure teachers assessments are consistent.

The school meets the requirements of the Bishop's Conference of England and Wales in ensuring that 10% of curriculum time is devoted to RE. The school uses the diocesan approved Come and See programme supplemented by Ten Ten resources.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Grade 1

The headteacher and her colleagues provide a clear message that collective worship is at the heart of this faith community and act as excellent role models. Living and learning in a faithful community provides an environment where pupils spiritual and moral development can grow and develop irrespective of their faith background.

Praying together at various times throughout the school day is a daily experience for all pupils and staff. From a young age pupils are familiar with the traditional prayers of the church and these build as they progress through the school. Prayer boxes in classrooms enables pupils to offer their own prayer intentions and pupils take turns in reading out a prayer from the box during the day. Class prayer tables provide a special focus area, they are beautifully cared for by pupils and staff and all include a Bible, candle, which is lit during prayer time, flowers, a religious artefact and an appropriate cloth reflecting the liturgical time of the year. One pupil commented that 'I like reflection time because it is calm.'

Collective worship is well planned and well delivered by both staff and pupils. Pupils speak very proudly of how they take responsibility for leading and preparing celebrations. There are a range of worship opportunities: whole school assemblies focusing on the Sunday Gospel, Bible assemblies focusing on a story from the Bible, celebration assemblies and Rejoice and Gather assemblies where parents are invited to attend as pupils share the work they have been doing in their RE lessons. Pupils take an active and leading role in all these practices. Mass is held at various times throughout the year to celebrate the school's feast days and other key events in the church's year. Pupils also have the opportunity to participate in the Stations of the Cross celebration and pray the Rosary during May and October; each pupil was given a set of Rosary beads during Lockdown so that everyone could experience this celebration irrespective of their faith background. Pupils across the school enjoy taking the Travelling Crib home during Advent and sharing their experiences with their family with peers.

Pupils were able to participate in an innovative experience during the autumn term when, rather than dressing up for Halloween, they were encouraged to dress like their favourite saint. Photographic evidence of pupils dressed, for example as St Patrick or St George showed the efforts pupils went to and the fun time they had celebrating as well as learning.

Links with the parish are strong and the parish priest is a regular and popular visitor to the school doing all he can to promote the school within the community as well as being an active member of the governing body. This provides a visible link which helps pupils and parents see the school as an extension of the parish. He celebrates Mass and holds Harvest festival, penitential and reconciliation services as well as an Ash Wednesday service at the start of Lent. The annual Christmas carol concert is held in the church and the production of the Easter story takes place in school. The RE subject leader is an active member of the parish and as such provides a visible presence in the community.