



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: Sacred Heart of Mary Girls School, Upminster

Inspection Date: 13/03/2014

URN 137233

Inspector: Rev Dr. W. J. Dickson SDB

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

Type of School: Academy
School Category: Secondary
Age range of pupils: 11-18
Gender of pupils: female
Number on roll: 826
Appropriate Authority: Havering
Date of previous inspection: 11/11/2009
Grade of this inspection: Outstanding

School Address:
Sacred Heart of Mary Girls' School
St Mary' Lane
Upminster
Essex RM14 2QR

Headteacher: Ms Kim O'Neill

Information about the school

Sacred Heart of Mary Girls' School is a Catholic Comprehensive Converter Academy in the county of Essex in the diocese of Brentwood. It serves the parishes in the Havering Borough and surrounding area. There are currently 826 pupils aged 11-18 on roll and the school is over subscribed. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage but with a proportion of students from minority ethnic (especially Black African) backgrounds that is in line with the national average; of whom 96.37% are Catholics. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average and the number of those eligible for the pupil premium is also below the national average. There are 61 full-time equivalent teachers of whom 28 are Catholic and 8 teachers have the CCRS. The school is accommodated in a variety of buildings, of various ages, some originally part of the Convent School and connected to the convent next door which is currently up for sale.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

Sacred Heart of Mary Girls' School is an outstanding school with a Catholic ethos which inspires its pupils. Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school and opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development are excellent. The new Head and her team have developed the profound sense of being a warm and welcoming family, close to the Heart of Mary, Jesus' Mother and open to the Holy Spirit. Effective Pastoral care is shared by all members of the school community at every level and supports learning. Relationships within the school are excellent and pupils feel well cared for and supported in their learning. Parents welcome the Catholicity of the school, appreciate the good communication with staff and the way the school keeps them informed. Pupils' standards of attainment in RE exceed national expectations.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement and has put in place systems which ensure its self-evaluation is accurate and rigorous and feeds the School Development Planning cycle. The last inspection in November 2009 identified no areas for development. Assessment is securely linked to planning. The RE staff are confident with the implementation of the new RE programme: 'The Way, The Truth and the Life' at KS 3 and Philosophy and Ethics in the Sixth Form. The quality of pupil engagement is outstanding and the school gives a high profile to religious education and has very good strategies to share good practice and support new teachers.

The 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. Senior staff are very good role models and all staff especially new staff are given excellent opportunities to extend their knowledge and improve their understanding of the Catholic Ethos and the particular charism of the Sisters who founded the school.

The Senior Leadership has an excellent capacity to maintain effectiveness. The recently appointed Headteacher who is enthusiastic and highly approachable shows outstanding leadership of a Catholic community through her leadership of prayer and worship, and effective pastoral care and is well supported by staff. Governors are supportive of the excellent Catholic Ethos of the School. Systems are in place to develop and strengthen it which lead to very good outcomes for all pupils. The Head of Religious Education and her team offer systematic and clear leadership of both the academic and spiritual life of the school

What the school should do to improve further

Enhance the Catholic life of the school even more by

- Reviewing the Mission Statement in an updated form.
- Ensure good succession planning for the future Catholic Leadership of the School.
- Develop and manage the role of the new chaplain in this excellent team.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Internal examinations and teacher assessment at KS3 indicate that pupils make excellent progress. Pupils' achievement at KS4 is well above the National Average. Each year 100% of pupils are entered for GCSE Religious Education, 55% of pupils entered in 2013 achieved A* or A grades and 90% of pupils achieved A*-C passes. Increasing numbers of students are taking up RS in the Sixth Form and attainment at post-16 is very good with 100% of pupils consistently achieving A-E at A2. This development is matched by some pupils going on to study Theology and Philosophy at university. A growing number of pupils accompany pilgrimages to Lourdes at Easter and in the summer with the Brentwood Youth Service. The pupils themselves make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They take real responsibility for community and spiritual life of the school, organizing assemblies, charity collections and through the well-developed system of liturgical class representatives and pupils chaplaincy teams make prayer and worship an outstanding feature of the school. The sensitive restoration of the historic Old Dissenting Chapel as a space for assemblies, liturgies and quiet prayer as well as being open to wider community use marks the School's fundamentally spiritually and Christian ethos. The involvement of so many pupils at every level in the school's spiritual and liturgical life leads to an internalization of the values of the Catholic School. The Sixth Form, members of the School Council and prefects play a major part in school life and older pupils help and support younger ones in a mentoring role.. Several local, national and international charities are supported throughout the year and last year their contributions to charity reached almost £11,000. Pupils show respect for adults and each other. Behaviour is excellent and pupils treasure the sense of familial community created within the school.

Prayer and worship are central to school life. Pupils respond positively to opportunities to develop their faith journey. They take immense responsibility for the preparation of assemblies, liturgies and masses and participate well. Form Liturgy reps and the chaplaincy team volunteers prepare and deliver class prayers, year and house assemblies and there is a regular opportunity for reflective silent prayer organized by the Chaplain. Each week different groups of student

take responsibility for preparing the Liturgy Notice board in the entrance which announces the theme of the week and also through a form collection provide the flowers that decorate the statue of Our Lady in the entrance. The traditional prayers of the Church are well known and pupils are encouraged to share their own prayer intentions at the beginning of RE lessons. They understand the importance of worship and are given opportunities for the preparation and training necessary to create their own prayers and liturgies, and in the Sixth Form to undertake the role of Special Ministers of the Eucharist.

Pastoral care is very good and given a high priority by 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 where to go when they need support. They value being in a friendly familial environment where they are listened to and encouraged to help each other. Parents value the care given to their children, the quality of education and the approachability of staff.

Progress in religious education is outstanding. Pupils work with application and interest. They enjoy their religious education lessons and work very well together. They are eager to participate in activities and keen to do well. They have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and abilities. Workbooks are very well presented, show coverage of the curriculum and indicate a varied range of tasks. Standards of attainment exceed national expectations.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

The headteacher and her team demonstrate excellent leadership of the school through the way they promote a clear Catholic vision to the whole community which is affirmed by staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible Catholic education for the pupils. The headteacher has developed a School Development Plan based on a rigorous system of self-evaluation which is detailed, accurate and identifies areas for improvement. The Self Evaluation Form gave a clear and accurate picture of the Catholic life of the school, illustrated with many effective examples. The systems in place and the documentation provided were second to none in providing a clear and accurate assessment of the current situation and clear ways forward. .

The SLT and Head of RE monitor religious education by means of lesson observations, work scrutiny and joint planning which is followed by feedback to individual teachers.

Governors work closely with senior leadership and have a very good understanding of strengths and areas for development in the school. They are well informed about the life of the school through the head teacher's report and the report from the Link Governor, who also represents the religious community which founded the school and in a new development, the school has celebrated its original Charism in a Foundation Day Mass.

The Head and her team ensure that the school is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued and diversity is celebrated. The school has developed new links with diocesan Catholic primary schools through the Sixth Form 'Faith in Action' programme where Sixth Formers volunteer to help in local primary schools. A wide range of charities are supported by the pupils who raised almost £11,000 pounds last year. Provision for spiritual development ensures 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. Regular parent and student surveys show strong support for the Catholic Ethos of the School.

The School is conscious of the need to develop its staff and strong Catholic leadership for the future and suitable provision for leadership training is already in place.

Provision

Grade 1

Provision for prayer and worship at Sacred Heart of Mary Girls School is outstanding. Pupils are directly engaged as Liturgy reps in each form and as Chaplaincy team volunteers in the preparation and delivery of Form Prayers, Year and House Assemblies and liturgies. The pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for the Main Weekly Spiritual Theme Notice Board and also in providing flowers for the statue of our Lady that stands in the entrance hall through their own collections. This results in engaging and effective acts of worship that contribute to pupils' spiritual development and confidence in their identity as young Catholics. The assemblies typically include video clips, visual presentations, bible readings poetry, and music which enriches their prayer life. Pupils are invited to share their prayer intentions at the beginning of RE lessons. Masses and the Sacrament of Reconciliation are celebrated in school throughout the year. Parents and Governors are invited to many celebrations. The priest from the school's local parish also supports the school through liturgies and involvement in the annual Carol Service held in the parish church.

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is excellent. During the inspection, all the lessons observed were good or outstanding. Lessons are carefully planned with clear learning objectives an interesting range of activities and proceed at a brisk pace. Pupils work very well and make very good progress. Teachers encourage pupils' comments and take every opportunity to extend knowledge and develop understanding. Marking is positive and includes suggestions of ways to improve. Excellent termly assessment, planning and tracking supports the learning and progress of pupils. Pupil perception surveys indicate that pupils are keen to know the next steps in their learning and pupils' more effective response to suggestions for improvement is being developed as part of the marking policy.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is outstanding. Generally taken together at KS3 and 4, 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The school carefully tracks the teaching of Sex and Relationships Education across the curriculum and also the wider social and moral and spiritual issues that are a feature of wider curriculum. At KS 3 the gradual introduction over three years of the RE programme, 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' which has brought a renewed academic impetus to lessons with it strong insistence on the scriptural background to Catholic belief and practice. At KS4 the curriculum encourages the pupils to develop their own ideas on modern issues in the context of Catholic teaching and current debate. The innovative use of ICT in Religious Education engages the students and offers really challenging homework and revision tasks and recently won an innovation prize from the Local Authority. The headteacher gives religious education a central place in the life of the school and this is demonstrated by the budget devoted to it which is equivalent to that given to Maths and English. The Sixth Form General RE programme addresses important current issues with expertise and also demands a practical Faith in Action response from the students which they appreciate. They are encouraged to become confident and effective young Catholic women. 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 the wider world. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development. The excellent range of extra-curricular activities enables pupils to develop their gifts and talents. There is every indication that current high standards are likely to be maintained or improved.

The inspectors would like to express their thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community, particularly the Head and SLT, the RE department and the Governors for their unfailing work and genuine welcome.

March 2014