



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for **St Helen's Catholic Infant School**

URN: 115307

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Alan Williams,sm, Bishop of Brentwood on:

Date: 9 - 10 March 2023

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The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- The school promotes inclusivity, providing a warm, welcoming, caring environment for pupils, staff and visitors, where everyone feels valued and respected.
- The school equips pupils with the skills to become life-long learners and active Christian citizens.
- Provision for Religious Education is given the highest priority and staff's love of teaching is infectious, pervading all aspects of school life.
- Senior leaders and governors are exemplary role models in promoting all aspects of Catholic life and mission and fully demonstrate the Church's mission in education.
- Highly positive relationships and exemplary pupil behaviour ensure the school is an exciting place in which to learn and grow.

This Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection was carried out under canons 804 & 806 of the code of canon law. For maintained schools and academies in England it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.48 of the Education Act 2005. For maintained schools and academies in Wales it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.50 of the Education Act 2005.

What the school needs to improve:

- Building on the good practice which already exists, to enable pupils to take increased responsibility for planning, leading and evaluating liturgy and prayer activities.
- To enable pupils to further deepen their understanding of Catholic Social Teaching.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1



Pupils demonstrate a real love for this inclusive school and find every opportunity to share this love with visitors. They know that they are part of a caring community with Christ at its heart and that all members of the school family are valued, cared for and recognised as unique individuals made in the likeness and image of God. Pupils take on responsibilities with great enthusiasm and speak passionately of their roles as liturgy leaders, prayer leaders and playground helpers. Staff comment that the pupils love being the prayer leader and 'wait with impatience for their turn.' Pupils can speak with great confidence of their care and concern for others, not just within their own school community but also within the wider community locally and nationally. Their words and actions demonstrate a clear understanding of Gospel values and a growing understanding of Catholic Social Teaching. They talk about their fund-raising efforts for charities including Cafod and local foodbanks, and helping out at the 'Winter Warmers' Soup lunch. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils are excellent both in lessons and around the school.

The mission statement, 'With Jesus alive in our hearts, we celebrate each other and learn together as a family', is at the heart of the school. It is truly demonstrated in the daily lives of all members of the community. The head teacher, her colleagues within school and the governing body, ensure that a real sense of community pervades the school, and provide a supportive environment in which to learn. The spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of all is given the highest priority and the school takes advantage of a school counsellor and the Rainbows programme to support pupils further. A parent commented that 'St Helen's promotes the spiritual development of my daughter and prepares her to make a positive

contribution to the world now and in the future'. The school environment creates a warm place in which to learn and grown. The entrance hall 'Prayer Tree' display clearly demonstrates the centrality of Catholic life and mission and this is further evidenced by many wonderful displays around the school, including delightfully decorated class banners reflecting their class scripture statements in the hall, and the beautiful mission crosses, made by pupils, which are transferred to pupils' new classes as they make their journey through school. Based on four saints – St Bernadette, St Clare, St Martin and St Francis, the school house system has a high profile in the school and is enthusiastically embraced by pupils. Relationships across the whole school community are excellent and help to deepen pupils' understanding of faith in action. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are nurtured and made to feel that they can achieve in this inclusive environment. Personal, social and health education and relationship and health education are carefully planned to reflect Catholic teachings and principles, and details of the schemes have been shared with governors and parents.

The head teacher and her senior colleagues ensure that the highest level of pastoral care is afforded to their pupils and that there is a deep commitment to the most vulnerable. All leaders including governors are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education, ensuring Christ is at the heart of the school. The recent school mission, the school environment and the parity with other core subjects, reflect the importance placed on Catholic life and mission. School leaders and governors are passionate about Catholic education and they are constantly driving the school forward. The school continues to foster strong links with parents who are kept very well informed of what is happening in school via the weekly newsletters, termly 'Come and See' newsletters, Twitter pages and year group pages, all of which contain a plethora of activities and photographs. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school; one parent commented that the school was helping their child to develop 'life-long skills such as compassion, kindness, respect and tolerance' and another reported that 'St Helen's Catholic life and mission is evident every day in the school, from prayer leaders to assemblies, to reflection areas to prayers morning, noon and night.' The very popular visits from the two parish priests reflect the very strong links between the school and the parish. Pupils speak with great fondness of celebrating liturgical events such as on Ash Wednesday and during Advent and Lent, as well as classroom visits by both priests. The school's self-evaluation is rigorous, open and honest. It reflects clearly their monitoring, analysis and self-challenge and leads to well-targeted and planned development. The governing body is well established and its high expectations and aspirations are reflected in the quality of Catholic life and mission. Staff feedback highlights how they feel valued and supported by the school and this results in a highly motivated and committed team.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

1

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

1



Pupils are developing excellent knowledge, understanding and skills as they journey through the school. The carefully-planned curriculum allows all pupils to make consistently good progress. This leads to all pupils achieving the best possible outcomes in both the early years foundation stage and key stage one. Pupils' religious literacy is particularly strong, enabling them to talk fluently and confidently about what they have learnt in religious education and to grow in their understanding of faith and its applications to daily life. They are curious, independent, articulate learners, who take full advantage of opportunities to participate in a variety of creative activities designed to enhance their learning. Across the school pupils engage actively with their learning and are motivated to improve their work and challenge themselves. Behaviour in lessons is outstanding and from an early age pupils can remain fully engaged and attentive for extended periods of time.

Staff have developed strong subject knowledge, display high levels of confidence and a deep commitment to delivering high quality, well planned lessons. They have high expectations of their pupils and deliver lessons which allow pupils to showcase what they have learnt in a variety of ways. Pupils speak enthusiastically of being able to take part in dance and drama, to respond to religious artworks and to undertake written activities to demonstrate their understanding and knowledge. Skilful questioning enables staff to assess this understanding and adapt activities to support or challenge pupils so that they consolidate concepts and learn extremely well. Additional adults are deployed very effectively to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs and ensures that they too learn extremely well. From an early age pupils know how well they are achieving in religious education and can explain with great confidence the star system teachers use when marking their work. They are able to explain

how important this feedback is in helping them to improve their work. Teachers have a strong understanding of the impact religious education has on the spiritual and moral development of their pupils and how to encourage this on a daily basis. Regular opportunities to assess pupils' work with colleagues within the school and across the diocese ensures that teacher assessment is accurate and enables pupils to develop their skills.

Leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum for religious education fully meets the requirements of the Religious Education Directory with regard to the allocation of time for religious education and the resources given to its delivery. The head teacher and her senior colleagues have a common vision for religious education. They are totally committed to empowering staff and ensuring they are given every opportunity to develop their skills in implementing the religious education curriculum. Continuing professional development is provided within the school, through partnership with other schools and with the diocese. Staff are well supported in planning the religious education curriculum to ensure it provides a wide range of activities to promote learning and enjoyment, and leaders ensure that a wide variety of high-quality resources are made available. School leaders and governors' monitoring and evaluation of religious education is regular and robust. This monitoring allows leaders to recognize and acknowledge areas of strength and areas for development and to take effective action to secure improvements. Regular lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, seeking the views of pupils and analysing pupil progress data are all used highly effectively to monitor the delivery of religious education.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

Pupils respond well to the experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school. They come together respectfully and fully engage in singing hymns, including children in reception who join in with actions confidently. Pupils know their school and traditional Catholic prayers and respond well to the good use of scripture within prayer and liturgy. Year 2 pupils are confident in describing key parts of the Church's liturgical year. All pupils, including the new liturgy leaders, work well with teachers to begin prayer with the sign of the cross and read prayers during collective worship. Additionally, pupils have opportunities to choose hymns for their class liturgies. Pupils are able to articulate how prayer is influenced by caring for others in their school and the importance of prayer for those in need around the world. Year 2 pupils know that prayer can help them to change behaviours to be more like Jesus.

That prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school can be seen in a variety of sources, including the school's website, annual planning for liturgies and the daily class timetables. There is a naturally-embedded pattern of prayer for pupils in classes and across the school community. The newly-renovated prayer garden provides pupils with a calm space in which to take time to pray. All pupils attend Mass on holy days of obligation and liturgies during Advent and Ash Wednesday. A rosary club and a May procession enable pupils to engage in the richness of Catholic traditions. Well-chosen scripture, linked to the Sunday Eucharist is at the heart of the Wednesday prayer and liturgy, allowing children to fully engage and reflect. One parent described how hearing the Gospel on Wednesday allows her child to engage more fully in Sunday Mass. Staff, including senior leaders, are inspiring models of exemplary practice to other staff and pupils, as participants in prayer and liturgy. Staff are skilled in helping pupils to begin to plan, lead and develop an understanding of the norms of the Church in prayer and liturgy. Music and liturgical dance are included, where appropriate, to enrich liturgies, and shared in the class spiritual journeys books. Parents are

welcomed to prayer and liturgies. These opportunities are highly valued by the community, who feel fully included in the prayer life of the school.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy follows the diocesan model and is easily accessible on the school's website. Useful prompts for the preparation of prayer and liturgy are displayed in all classes and support staff clearly use these when organising prayer and liturgy. Leaders, including governors, have a clear strategic priority to ensure the Eucharist is celebrated on holy days of obligation. Advent, Lent and months devoted to Our Lady are also given high priority, including extra-curricular clubs at these times. Professional development for staff to support the planning of prayer and liturgy is well-planned and effective. The school benefits from high levels of chaplaincy support from two priests, who are regular and welcome visitors. The parish priest leads key liturgies that enable engaging prayer opportunities for pupils. Leaders, including governors, recognise the importance of prayer and liturgy when setting budget and allocating staff resources. They also regularly review prayer and liturgy as part of the school's cycle of self-evaluation and are beginning to seek the views of pupils as part of the self-evaluation process.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Helen's Catholic Infant School
School unique reference number (URN)	115307
Full postal address of the school	Sawyers Hall Lane Brentwood CM15 9BY
School phone number	01277 215626
Name of head teacher or principal	Amanda McAuliffe
Chair of governing board	Michael Sutherland-Harper
School Website	http://www.st-helens-inf.essex.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	4-7
Trustees	Click or tap here to enter text.
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	21 October 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Angela Podmore	Lead Inspector
Gael Hicks	Team Inspector
Isabel Quinn	Shadow Inspector
Name of inspector	Lead/team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement