



## **DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD**

### **Denominational (S48) Inspection Report**

**Name of School: Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary School**

**Local Authority: Essex**

**Inspection Date: 20<sup>th</sup> May 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: Academy  
School Category: Primary  
Age range of pupils: 4 -11  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 390  
Appropriate Authority: Essex  
Date of previous inspection: June 2016**

**School Address: Little Wheatley Chase  
Rayleigh  
Essex  
SS6 9EH**

**Tel. No. 01268 785741  
Headteacher: Mr Paul Parascandolo  
Chair of Governors: Mrs Amanda Pelham**

## Information about the school

Our Lady of Ransom School is a two form entry primary academy within the Assisi Catholic Trust in the Diocese of Brentwood. There are 390 pupils on roll of which 51% are Catholic, 22% are from other Christian backgrounds with the remainder coming from other world faiths or no faith. There are a lower number of pupils who have English as an additional language, who are deemed to have Special Educational Needs or are in receipt of pupil premium funding than nationally. The school serves the parishes of Our Lady of Ransom, Rayleigh and Our Lady of Good Counsel, Wickford. Of the 20 teachers, 15 are Catholic and 6 have either the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or another Catholic qualification.

## Key grades for inspection

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

## Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

## Grade 1

Our Lady of Ransom School is an outstanding school, proud of its Mercy values and traditions. Under the excellent leadership of its ambitious Headteacher and his equally committed and dedicated senior colleagues, it is a place where pupils develop academically, spiritually and morally into young people ready to face the challenges of the modern world. It is an all-inclusive community of faith where every member of that community is valued and respected, every person is seen as unique and made in the image of God.

Parents comment that Our Lady of Ransom is an extension of family and governors report that the school gives pupils a sense of ambition, 'pupils have a voice'. Pupils and parents are rightly proud of their school reporting that 'A fabulous ethos resonates at Our Lady of Ransom', 'Inspiring children to be kind and caring members of the school and wider community'.

The school's Mission Statement is clear and understood by the whole community, clearly setting out the school's aims. The words 'Welcomed, Loved, Forgiven, Encouraged', beautifully set in a cross from the Mercy tradition and taken from the Mission Statement are prominently displayed for all to see and aspire to.

School leaders share a clear vision for the school. They are passionate in their determination to ensure that Our Lady of Ransom is fully committed to the church's mission in education and that their Catholic identity and Mercy charism are widely celebrated and promoted. Along with knowledgeable and committed governors they have a strong vision for continuous development and ensure that pupils are provided with an environment which is highly conducive to learning.

## What the school should do to improve further:

- To expand and develop the role of the Religious Education Ambassadors across the school.
- To further explore opportunities for engaging boys in order to continue to narrow the gap in achievement between boy and girls.

The Catholic Life is a real strength of Our Lady of Ransom and permeates all aspects of school life.

From the beautiful, welcoming displays and iconography in the entrance hall, the school proudly declares its Catholic identity to visitors and the wider community. The whole environment clearly evidences that Our Lady of Ransom is a community of faith where Gospel values shape the lives of everyone in the community. High quality displays in classrooms, corridors and the school hall are further testimony to the importance leaders place on Catholic Life and Catholic Social Teaching, providing a rich and stimulating environment in which to live and learn.

The school Mission Statement 'A place of Mercy. Where everyone is welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to learn, as we follow in the footsteps of Jesus', was written with input from all stakeholders and responds to a line in *Evangelii Gaudium* and builds on the school's Mercy tradition. Pupils are exposed to the Mission Statement throughout their time at the school. It is recited daily (with actions), is displayed around the school, in classrooms and on books. Members of the school Learning Council challenged themselves to ensure that all pupils not only could recite it but also knew how it affected their daily lives. They planned and delivered a presentation for their peers taking each line of the statement and discussed what it meant and how it could be demonstrated in daily life and actions.

Pupils fully appreciate and take advantage of the many opportunities the school offers them to shape and develop the Catholic Life of the school. They are proud to be members of the school and take their responsibilities very seriously. The Head Girl and Head Boy, democratically elected by their peers, carry on the tradition of 55 years to act as positive role models and inspire their peers. The School Learning Council report that they empower their peers to live and demonstrate kindness, mercy and forgiveness. Again they are powerful role models.

The Eco Council is a very committed and active group of pupils who take responsibility for, amongst other things, putting the Pope's *Laudate Si* initiative into action. They challenge themselves with protecting their immediate school environment and doing what they can to protect the wider environment. Their 'Forest of Promises' sent to the recent COP 26 conference resulted in them receiving a certificate congratulating them on 'helping to grow a better future for people and planet.'

The newly formed Bible Club run by Year 6 pupils is a lovely opportunity for them to share their love of scripture with their younger peers. During the inspection they shared the story of The Lost Sheep with Year 1 pupils. They created a nurturing environment to sit and listen and asked challenging questions of their younger colleagues; warm positive relations ensured the atmosphere was encouraging and welcoming.

Year 6 play leaders speak enthusiastically of their role. They are well trained and understand their responsibilities very well. They provide a fun time, devising and playing games and making sure everyone is included. They told the inspector that they enjoy sharing their time with the younger children and making a difference.

Pupils enthusiastically take part in activities which reflect Catholic life and mission. During a tour of the school the Head Boy and Girl proudly pointed out their Faith in Action board showing the variety of ways they involve themselves in helping and supporting others- CAFOD, Cancer Research UK, Brain Tumour UK, St Vincent de Paul Society, the Ukraine appeal and Big Hearted Friday Mission are a few of the charities for which they have raised considerable funds.

Buddy Groups led by Year 6 pupils and including pupils from Year R to Year 5, is a unique opportunity for pupils to become better learners. Various topics are discussed linked to the PSHE curriculum and 'Learning and Life Skills' programme encouraging pupils to become independent learners ready to take on challenges.

Each class at the school is named after a saint and pupils in Year 4 were very keen to show the inspector the drawings and research they had undertaken on their class saint. They were as proud of their fellow

classmates' work as they were of their own. The recognition of other people's efforts is also clearly seen in the Friday Celebration Assembly where pupils are recognised for their work, behaviour and achievements throughout the week.

Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are kind to each other and enjoy each other's company. Older pupils act as excellent role models for their younger peers. All staff promote very high standards of behaviour, they too act as excellent role models. The whole school community is built on mutual respect and restorative justice, continuously building on their Mercy traditions.

Pope Francis' prayer intention for May for 'Faith filled young people' is clearly being fulfilled by the young people of Our Lady of Ransom School.

Parents are highly supportive of the school, one commenting that they 'feel extremely blessed' to belong to Our Lady of Ransom. They are kept well informed of events in the life of the school via weekly newsletters, curriculum overviews of what is being taught in Religious Education (RE) and RSHE. They are now being welcomed back into school to join the school community for Mass, Class Assemblies, Feast Day celebrations and the Annual First Holy Communion Picnic. During the inspection, Year 6 parents joined the school in celebrating the May Procession service.

The pastoral needs of pupils and their families is given the highest priority. Adults comment that during the recent pandemic lockdowns, the school's care was 'exceptional' and a deep commitment to support bereaved families was paramount. Pupils' well-being is also given high priority and the school uses the services of the Brentwood Catholic Children's Society to support them.

Governors have a solid understanding of the school and make a significant contribution to the lives of all members of the community. They are regular visitors to the school and are passionate in their determination to ensure that Our Lady of Ransom continues to be a place where every child has the opportunity to thrive and be valued for who they are.

The Headteacher, his senior leaders and governors share an ambition for Our Lady of Ransom to be the best it can be and to ensure pupils take their place in society armed with qualities to make a difference. They are passionate in providing an outstanding experience of living and working in a supportive faith filled community which has a deep and lasting effect on the spiritual and moral development of the pupils.

Religious Education (RE) is given very high priority at the school. The RE curriculum fully meets the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales requirement that 10% of curriculum time is dedicated to RE. The school follows the diocesan approved Come and See programme supplemented by Ten Ten resources.

Pupils enjoy RE lessons and take a full and active part in all lesson activities. Their books are well presented, a clear demonstration of the respect they hold for the subject. Books contain a large volume of work undertaken; feedback is given and pupils act upon it to improve their work. Beautiful 'Floor Books' in the Early Year Foundation Stage reflect not only the high quality work produced but also the very good progress pupils make.

Pupils achieve very well in RE and the quality of work in books is very high showing very good and in some cases outstanding progress. There is clear evidence of a growing and deeper understanding of the topics covered as pupils journey through the school, building on prior learning. Robust data analysis allows teachers and the two subject leaders to spot any barriers to learning and implement strategies to overcome them. A review of topics in order to engage and appeal to boys has been undertaken to narrow the gap in achievement between boys and girls.

Pupils from a young age are exposed to religious vocabulary and driver words by means of the classroom Come and See boards and as such are becoming increasingly religiously literate.

Additional adults are deployed very well to support pupils with additional needs. They know their pupils very well and optimise learning opportunities for each of their pupils.

Teachers plan lessons which engage and challenge pupils. They ensure pupils are actively committed to producing their best work. High quality resources enhance learning experiences and pupils in the early years thoroughly enjoyed singing along to 'You've got a friend in me' during their topic on Friends. During a Year 1 lesson on 'Choices', there was a tangible sense of awe and wonder when a package was delivered to their classroom for the Headteacher. This quickly turned to concern and shock when the teacher ate the cake intended for the Headteacher. The high quality discussions which ensued on making right choices clearly showed that, even from a very young age, pupils are fully aware of right and wrong and how to make amends when a 'bad' choice has been made. The children are to be commended for their excellent responses to this topic.

Older pupils' engagement in their lesson on how the Holy Spirit shapes their lives, provided opportunities for excellent high quality discussions and collaborative work. Everyone was given the opportunity to voice their ideas and opinions and all were valued and respected. The discussions were powerful and clearly demonstrated a solid understanding of what is meant by being a witness to God.

Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and have very high expectations of their pupils. The two subject leaders act as excellent role models for their colleagues. They are passionate, committed and ambitious for their subject and continually seek to develop the subject. Learning conversations allows leaders to assess and develop topics through open dialogue and discussions with teachers and pupils and provide help and support and ideas to enhance learning opportunities for pupils. Moderation within school and across the Assisi Catholic Trust ensures that teacher assessment is accurate. Opportunities for Continual Professional Development training ensures that the subject leaders and teachers are fully aware of new developments within RE and implement them into their teaching.

Collective worship is central to the lives of all members of the school community, it is intrinsic. Pupils have many and varied opportunities to experience and participate in Collective Worship.

During the inspection pupils attended a beautiful May Day celebration. Inclement weather prevented the annual procession to the convent prayer garden but did not prevent the reverence pupils showed throughout the celebration. The hall was filled with the aroma of dozens of vases of beautiful flowers, which the children had brought with them, and the sound of hundreds of focused, engaged, reverent children singing joyously and praying the Rosary led by the Parish Priest and older pupils, all of which provided a very special and memorable celebration.

Collective worship is well planned and pupils are able to enjoy school Masses as well as a variety of assemblies led by adults and pupils. Older pupils are taking increasing responsibility for planning, leading and delivering assemblies and acts of worship. Pupils enjoy the Monday Gospel assembly where they are able to reflect on the previous Sunday's Gospel. These assemblies reinforce the importance of gospel values and seek to encourage pupils to implement them in their daily lives. Pupils' behaviour during acts of worship is excellent, they demonstrate true reverence and know that assemblies are a time to reflect and pray and listen to the word of God.

During the build up to celebrating Easter, pupils participate in the Stations of the Cross liturgy, with each class being tasked with representing a station to the rest of the school in the hall. The pupils also have the opportunity to reflect on the Stations of the Cross outside during Lent. Daily prayer group meetings to pray the Rosary during May and October are well attended, services during Lent and Advent provide pupils with the opportunity to take part in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The Junior Legion of Mary, a small but dedicated group of girls meet after school on Friday with adult members of the parish adult Legion of Mary group.

Prayer is intrinsic to life at Our Lady of Ransom. Pupils pray several times throughout the day and at 12 noon all pupils from year 2 upwards pray the Angelus with pupils leading the prayer in individual classes.

Class prayer areas are further testimony to the importance the school places on prayer. They are beautifully maintained by pupils, who say that it is the responsibility of everyone to make sure the area is well kept. They ensure that the Bible is enthroned and open at the correct place, the prayer cloth is the correct liturgical colour and that the candle and fresh flowers are in place. Class prayer boards, completed by pupils, ask for prayers for a variety of causes. Pupils are exposed to different prayer types and experiences including reflection and meditation; prayers of adoration, thanksgiving, petition and sorrow. Pupils are taught the age-appropriate traditional prayers of the church as well as being encouraged to talk to God during times of spontaneous prayer.

The Parish Priest is a frequent and welcome visitor to the school. He leads the school community in celebrating Mass for different occasions and joins pupils in class to talk about topics such as baptism and vocation. Links with the parish are very strong with pupils joining the parish community for the Christmas Advent concert and Easter service. Families of children making their First Holy Communion enjoy a picnic in the school. Children and families from other Christian denominations and world faiths are also invited to this celebration. A written comment from a parent stated that Our Lady of Ransom is a 'Great school that puts Religious Education at the heart of everything it does.' Whilst another said 'Thank you for all you do to teach the ways of Jesus for everyday life'.