



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Denominational (S48) Inspection Report

Name of School: Ursuline Preparatory School
Local Authority: Essex

Inspection Date: 6th May 2022

Reporting Inspector: Damian Fox (Lead Inspector)

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

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| Type of School: | Primary | School Address: | Old Great Ropers |
| School Category: | Independent | | Great Ropers Lane |
| Age range of pupils: | 3-11 | | Warley |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed | | Essex |
| Number on roll: | 171 | | CM13 3HR |
| Appropriate Authority: | The Governing Body | Tel. No. | 01277 227152 |
| Date of previous inspection: | 05 November 2015 | Headteacher: | Mrs Pauline Wilson, M.B.E. |
| | | Chair of Governors: | Mrs Fiona Deery |

Information about the school

The Ursuline Preparatory School is an Independent Primary and Nursery school for boys and girls aged between three and eleven years. The school is in the Diocese of Brentwood. It is situated in the town of Brentwood and is managed by a Board of Governors. The roll is 171. The school serves primarily the parish of Brentwood Cathedral. Other pupils come from a range of parishes, including the Holy Redeemer, Billericay, Our Lady Immaculate, Chelmsford and Christ the Eternal High Priest, Gidea Park. The overall proportion of students who are baptised Catholic is 28%. A further 40% of pupil are from other Christian traditions. There are 12% from another faith background. 13 pupils are on the SEND register covering all categories of need. 69% of pupils identify themselves as white British background. 14% are from British Asian and Indian background. The remaining pupils identify as being from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds within the school.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

The Ursuline Preparatory School is an outstanding Catholic school at all levels. It explicitly espouses Gospel values through its faith and practice. Its heartfelt welcome reflects the pride everybody has in the school and the respect all members of the community have for the dignity of each person. Leadership and management at all levels is highly effective as evidenced in the focused leadership of the dedicated headteacher and senior leadership team, working in concert with the governing body. Leaders demonstrate a distinct understanding of their role in providing an authentic Catholic school that ensures every member of the community is valued. They are active in their support for all aspects of school life. Governors are knowledgeable and have a deep understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development. Pastoral care has a profound impact on the lives of the community. It reflects the school's long-term aspirations for the academic, moral and spiritual growth of each person. Pupils consistently engage in activities that reflect the mission of the school to love and serve others. Their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils experience increasing opportunities for prayer and worship. In these and other areas they take on responsibility to serve others willingly and responsibly. Religious Education is a particular strength of this high achieving school, reflecting its position as a core subject in a Catholic school. Outcomes are outstanding and in line with whole school performance.

What the school should do to improve further:

Continue to create new opportunities for all pupils to experience retreats.

Further develop the prayer life of the school by strengthening the role of Liturgy Prefects as spiritual leaders across the school.

CATHOLIC LIFE

Grade 1

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Pupils know they are privileged and they are genuinely happy to be part of a warm and harmonious family. Pupils benefit from being in a school where Gospel values underpin every aspect of daily life. They understand what it means to belong to a Catholic school. The impact of strong pastoral care is evident in the unbounded joy and pride with which they spoke of the care they receive. They confidently talk about supporting one another and belonging to a family where everyone is valued, respected and cared for. Pupils particularly appreciate the 'Green Box' because it allows them to express fears and worries confidentially, knowing that teachers will understand and respond. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent and are based on mutual respect and a belief that they are there to serve each other rather than be served. Pupil leadership is a strength of the school. Older pupils, particularly the Head Pupils, are outstanding role models for younger pupils and contribute effectively to creating an environment in which pupils know they are secure and cared for. School Council members confirmed they are listened to and their ideas respected. Eco-Council pupils have a genuine

understanding that the world is God's creation and of their responsibility to protect it for future generations. They recognise their own and others' gifts and know that they are given by God. An understanding of their vocation is demonstrated through their engagement in activities throughout the year by sharing the gifts they have in school and the wider community. Pupils' enthusiastically embrace the opportunity to recognise the needs of others in the wider community. Year 6 pupils completed the CAFOD 'Walk against hunger' project during Lent, raising £400. Further activities, such as supporting the Harlow foodbank reflect pupils' appreciation of the good things they have. Pupils particularly referenced the supportive link with a Catholic school in Uganda. 'Love your neighbour' is not merely an aspiration. Parents overwhelmingly recognise what their children gain from being at the school. They were unanimous in praising the teachers for their unstinting care.

The impact of the mission statement is evident in the warm and respectful relationships throughout the school. All staff are fully committed to its implementation, as confirmed by pupils who spoke warmly of the support, praise and encouragement they receive. Pupils acknowledged that they were involved in writing their own version. The Head Boy said it was important to do this to help younger pupils develop their understanding that 'We acknowledge that God is our Father and that every one of us is His son or His daughter'. The school environment reflects the Catholic mission and identity through tangible and effective signs of the school's character. It reflects the Catholic identity, prayer life and Catholic life of the school with high quality displays, artefacts and prayer tables. The efficacy of chaplaincy provision is profound. It is instrumental in providing a range of opportunities for pupils to develop the practice of their faith. Although retreats were paused during lockdown, school plans show an aspiration to ensure all pupils experience the spiritual dimension of retreats. The highest level of pastoral care for pupils is appreciated by all parents. Post-covid plans show that strong links with the Church and wider Parish Community will be further reinforced through the attendance of the Brentwood parish and beyond. Strong pastoral care and the nurturing environment helps pupils to develop positive attitudes towards school. Pupils have a real compassion for others. This reflects the impact of thoughtfully designed, carefully planned, consistently well taught pastoral, PSHE and RSE programmes. This is evident in all school policies and procedures. Feedback from parents and carers reflects overwhelming support of the school in its mission and vocation to serve.

The self-evaluation is accurate and insightful. It was fully endorsed by the inspector in all areas. It demonstrates the effectiveness of leadership at all levels. It reflects Leaders' deep and sincere commitment to the Church's mission in education. Leaders and managers have a strong sense of vocation to provide a school that responds to the needs and strengths of staff and pupils. There is a tangible culture of care. The development of the Catholic Life of the school is viewed by leaders and governors as a core leadership responsibility. It is a significant part of the School Development Plan. Governors bring their personal faith to leadership. With a wealth of experience, they form a powerful partnership with the headteacher and Senior leaders. This ensures all members of the community are inspired to play a full part in developing the Catholic Life of the school. The headteacher works with a neighbouring Catholic independent school to maintain and promote Catholic education in the independent school network. This demonstrates her commitment to developing both her own understanding of the efficacy of Catholic education and her commitment to strengthening the values inherent in the Church. The vision of leaders and governors for the school is further reflected in the induction of new staff and the support given to all staff irrespective of their faith background. Teachers know their responsibilities as members of a Catholic school and work effectively with each other for the welfare of pupils.

Outcomes in Religious Education are outstanding. Nearly all pupils, including those with special education needs and/or disabilities, make at least good, and often outstanding progress. They genuinely enjoy their lessons and appreciate the range of opportunities to learn about Christianity and other world religions. They respond positively to the curriculum and enjoy their learning. This is evidenced by outstanding behaviour for learning and high levels of engagement in learning. In all lessons, pupils displayed good, and in most cases, outstanding, age-appropriate standards of religious literacy. This was further evidenced in the school assembly. Pupils are always happy, willing and enthusiastic to discuss their learning in Religious Education lessons. They show an interest in them, sustain concentration and are totally engaged in their learning. The quality of pupils' current work is outstanding. It shows that they value their RE books. Pupils in all key stages demonstrate high levels of motivation to learn, as a result of the praise and encouragement they receive for their work and attitude. Observations of lessons showed that most pupils can apply a range of skills including independence, collaborative work and the ability to use scripture as evidence.

Almost all pupils make rapid and sustained progress in Religious Education as a result of teaching that is consistently good and often outstanding. Pupils confidently work together, and individually, as a result of highly effective lessons that are characterised by excellent pedagogical practice. A range of methods motivate pupils to engage in their own learning. Outstanding lessons were characterised by the building on prior learning, key words, such as Resurrection and Ascension, planning and the engagement of pupils. In many lessons, questioning was used very effectively to challenge pupils. Higher level thinking results in more analytical thought as evidenced in Years 5 and 6. Support staff were quietly effective which ensured certain pupils, for example those with specific needs, made progress. The range of methods, such as singing, helped pupils, especially those with SEND, to enjoy what they were doing. In most lessons, from the joyous and wonderfully active exemplar Nursery and Prep lesson, to the higher-level thinking in Year 6, the consistent thread was building on previous study, ensuring pupils were learning from the outset. The school acknowledges that further training will help teachers have an effective start to lessons more consistently. Behaviour for learning is exemplary as a result of the range of ways the RE curriculum is presented. Teachers are confident in using a wide range of resources and strategies that inspire pupils' engagement and learning. Rigorous and effective assessment at all key stages is undertaken in line with the school's policy. It is used to measure progress against set criteria. Assessment identifies pupils' strengths and areas that need further support. Moderation within the department, and across the school, results in consistent and accurate assessment of pupils' attainment and progress.

Leaders and governors ensure the RE curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and in each key stage, including the appropriate curriculum allocation of 10%. They are ambitious for sustaining high standards of teaching and learning in RE. Governors are proud of the school's achievements and are determined to lead the school in continually improving standards. The Chair is very experienced and knowledgeable. Along with the Trustees, she frequently visits the school. She confirmed governors play a major role in the development of the three-year school plan for improvements. The 'Governors Day' has proved to be an effective way of monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision for RE. As a result, the self-evaluation of Religious Education is an accurate reflection of rigorous monitoring and analysis of teaching and learning that is well informed by current practice. The headteacher, ably supported by senior staff and governors, demonstrates strong and inspirational leadership of teaching and learning. She is committed to school improvement and has a thorough understanding of its strengths and its priorities. There is a clear strategic plan for progress. Governors are further continually provided with data relating to all aspects of RE. The teaching of RE is monitored and reported to governors, who take an active interest in the school and evaluate the impact of school improvement. The SMT, subject coordinator and staff share and deliver the school's vision for RE because school leaders provide clear direction and have created a culture of receptivity that inspires confidence and whole-hearted commitment from pupils and colleagues. There is a very low turnover of staff. As a consequence, Religious Education has a high profile in the life of the school and in initiatives within the school. It has a profound impact on the moral and spiritual development of pupils.

Pupils demonstrate a high regard for the Catholic life of the school as shown through their commitment and participation in Collective Worship, for example reading and singing. They respond enthusiastically to the many opportunities to lead and participate in prayer. They said everybody was included, regardless of their faith background. Pupils demonstrate reverence and respect during Collective Worship and their responses in liturgies and prayer times are enthusiastic and often display a deep understanding of scripture and an awareness of their own level of spirituality. The behaviour of pupils during prayer and worship is outstanding and there is a mutual respect modelled between all adults and children. The school assembly was a deeply spiritual experience for pupils. Its impact was evident in the way they read clearly, listened attentively and sang with enthusiasm. Leadership of collective worship is highly effective through the increasing number of pupils who are taking a more active role in preparing and leading chaplaincy activities. Pupils recognise that prayer is part of the daily rhythm of school life. They spoke of their pride in being prayer partners. They acknowledge that living in a praying community has a profound effect on the spiritual development of all, irrespective of ability or faith background. Pupils expressed a deep sense of respect for those of other faiths and this is reflected in the ease with which they spoke of the opportunities to pray in their own way.

The effectiveness of chaplaincy provision is evident in the range of opportunities for pupils of all ages to pray. Around the school there is a variety of opportunities for prayer. These include prayer spaces in the corridor, the developing Prayer Garden, outside prayer areas and class prayer tables. These areas are very special to pupils and enable them to freely express their thoughts and feelings through prayer. Good quality, well prepared prayer takes place daily. The extensive and varied programme for liturgical celebrations reflects their high profile in the daily routine of school life. Prayer is an integral and important part of the school day. All classes pray together at the beginning and at the end of each day, as well as before lunch; prayers are also shared during each RE lesson. Teachers work very hard to provide everyone with a high-quality experience of liturgy to support their own spiritual journeys. Pupils confirmed these extensive and varied religious experiences form the heart of school celebrations and are part of the daily routine of learning. Collective Worship has a clear purpose, message and direction. Themes chosen reflect a deep understanding of the liturgical season. The extensive range of weekly Masses, assemblies and prayer experiences serve to offer outstanding provision for all key stages. Weekly assemblies, half termly school Masses and daily form prayer reflect the significance of collective worship in the life of the school. Collective worship, underpinned by the mission statement, is promoted as a priority. Standards of behaviour are excellent, reflecting the impact of prayer on the mindset of pupils.

Leaders and governors are deeply committed to the provision of highly effective liturgical celebrations. They have an expert understanding of their responsibility to provide spiritual and liturgical opportunities in line with the Church's liturgical year. Chaplaincy constitutes a key strength of the school. The headteacher is passionately committed to building an authentic Catholic community in partnership with governors and staff. She has ensured that prayer and worship are an integral part of each day and are inclusive of all pupils. Governors monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship through their regular visits to the school and through their attendance at Mass and seasonal liturgies. They demonstrate a profound understanding of the impact of prayer throughout the school. It serves as a prayerful oasis in the midst of a busy school life