



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Helen's Catholic Primary School

URN: 146015

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

Date: 18-19 May 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 is a supportive and joyful community, celebrating its rich diversity and providing a welcoming safe environment for pupils.
- The school has a deep sense of commitment to supporting its pupils and families, especially the most vulnerable.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school because they know they are valued and cared for, enabling them to grow in confidence and feel secure in the certain knowledge that they are loved.
- The school has worked very hard to engage with parents, forming strong partnerships.
- Relationships throughout the school are highly positive and based on the highest levels of care.

What the school needs to improve:

- To share the good practice that exists in the teaching of religious education to ensure that consistency in teacher expectations is firmly embedded across the school.
- To further develop the role of the religious education coordinator to enhance the practice and provision for the school.

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:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2



Pupils at St Helen's enjoy school life; they are happy, confident young people relishing the responsibilities the school offers them. Pupils recognise and appreciate that they are members of a Catholic community rich in its diversity; they value being presented with the role model of Jesus as a way of living out their lives. They fully understand that they are truly valued as unique individuals made in the likeness and image of God. Liturgy leaders, Eco Warriors and school councillors act as positive role models for their peers and lead on issues relating to the Catholic life and mission of the school. Pupils talk confidently about their charity work raising funds for and showing a real concern for those in need. They have been involved in helping various charities both locally and nationally such as joining in the Big Sleep Out to raise funds for HARP, the St Vincent de Paul society, and Cafod initiatives. Pupils fully understand the reasons behind their efforts, reporting that it is what Jesus would want them to do. They treat everyone with respect ensuring that in class and around the school their behaviour is good. Pupils are kind to each other, helping one another both socially and academically. The Eco Warriors team speak enthusiastically of their work on the Rainbow Garden and planting oak and silver birch trees to enhance the environment, along with their efforts to keep the school tidy. Pupil's enthusiasm for their school is demonstrated in the high value they place on the positive relationships clearly seen around the school. Parents and pupils value the diversity of St Helen's and the richness it brings to their daily lives.

The school's mission statement, which pupils enjoy saying with actions, has a real impact on the daily lives of all members of the school community. Its centrality is evident throughout the school environment, and in the positive relationships observed. The mission statement is beautifully displayed not just on the walls but on classroom windows, acting as a constant

reminder of God's presence. The school demonstrates a real commitment to support those who are most in need, with a parent reporting that, '...the school takes an active approach to Catholic mission' and another saying, 'We love how the school comes together to live the mission...' Staff feel well supported by leaders, and pupils are happy and confident in their interactions with adults. There is no doubt that St Helen's is a warm and welcoming place with a strong sense of community. As one member of staff reported, 'God is in us all and everything we do as a school community. We are a happy house of God' and another saying, 'Staff support each other and provide help on a daily basis.' The school environment is reflective of its Catholic identity and there are good facilities to support pupils with additional needs such as the Rainbow Room; pastoral support is very strong. Parents report that the school consistently goes the extra mile to support pupils and families. Pupils are given many opportunities to grow spiritually and morally; parents recognise this, commenting that '..there is very much a spiritual warmth within the environment' and that there is 'good spiritual support from the school.' Pupils benefit from personal, social, health and economic education, and relationships, sex, and health education programmes which meet the diocesan guidance and are faithful to the teachings of the Church. Programmes have been shared with parents.

School leaders and governors have a clear commitment to ensuring that Catholic life and mission is at the heart of the school and is given a high priority. As a result, all school policies fully reflect the Catholic identity, charism and mission of the school. They have vision for the school and are dedicated to guiding the school to its full potential after the difficulties they encountered during the pandemic. The head teacher and her senior colleagues have worked hard to develop a strong and thriving partnership with parents, the local parish, and other schools within the Assisi Trust. Parents are kept well informed of school events and are invited to join the school community for liturgical events and celebrations. The school's strong partnership with parents ensures all staff know their families well. Parents who responded to the on-line survey and those who spoke with inspectors were very supportive of the school. New staff feel very well supported by the whole school community and staff morale is high. Governors make a good contribution to the life of the school; they are conscientious and committed in their role, and they bring a high level of expertise to the school.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2



Pupils are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Pupils revisit prior learning in lessons which helps to build up their knowledge. As a result, they make good progress as they journey through school. Pupils in Year 6 were able to make excellent links to the previous day's homily in Mass, when discussing a piece of religious art in their lesson on the Ascension. Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons and can talk confidently about what they are and have been learning; they are able to use religious vocabulary during conversations and written work. Their written work is generally well presented and of a good quality, but this is not consistent throughout all year groups. Pupils are given opportunities to work collaboratively with talk partners or in groups, which leads to excited and thoughtful discussions. Pupil conversations on what heaven is like, and Saul's conversion showed a real depth of understanding and religious thinking. Younger pupils' responses to some beautifully religious art resources demonstrated a real sense of awe and wonder. Pupil achievement in religious education is good, leading to outcomes which are in line with those in other core subjects.

Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and impart it with confidence. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, resources were used effectively to support the story of the Ascension, leading to pupils having a good understanding of the events. Teachers use questioning effectively and purposefully during lessons to monitor pupils' understanding; this is particularly effective in the upper part of the school. Staff are quick to deal with any misconceptions. A variety of learning activities are provided for pupils. As a result, pupils speak enthusiastically about their lessons and how they enjoy demonstrating their knowledge via role play, discussing religious art as well as writing. Younger pupils loved

making Pentecost crowns and biscuits and were very keen to share these with the inspection team. Pupils in Key Stage 1 thoroughly enjoyed acting out different ways of communicating good news in today's modern society. Pupils know how well they are doing in religious education because staff follow the school policy for marking and assessment. This informs pupils what they have done well and how they can improve their work, as well as providing verbal feedback to pupils. In the best lessons additional adults work very effectively with pupils, guiding and supporting their learning, but this is not always consistent throughout the school.

School Leaders ensure that the curriculum is faithful to the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Along with governors they ensure that religious education is given high priority and parity with other core subjects in terms of professional development, resourcing and accommodation. Currently two members of staff are undertaking the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies to further develop their expertise and practice in the teaching of religious education. Staff report that they are well supported by senior colleagues and the subject leader for religious education. The subject leader has a clear vision for her subject and a deep commitment to ensuring the best outcomes for pupils. Moderation meetings take place within school and with colleagues from across the Assisi Trust. These ensure that staff assessments of pupils' work is validated and accurate. The school is compiling a folder of exemplar materials to support staff in the assessment process.

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

2

Leadership

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

2



The experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school engage pupils and lead them to respond well. This can clearly be seen in the way they participate in moments of silent reflection, the traditional prayers of the church, including their school prayer, and the enthusiasm and confidence which they show in singing joyfully. Pupils can confidently articulate the different ways of praying they encounter, including petition, thanksgiving, and intercession. Pupils report that they enjoy writing their own prayers and reading them to their peers. Pupils can reflect on how prayer has led to action, recounting how praying for the people of the Ukraine led to them organising fund raising events to support those living there. Pupils then added a Ukrainian prayer to their daily class prayers, as well as making a human Ukrainian flag to show their solidarity. Older pupils participate in the ecumenical World Day of Prayer service and the local branch of the group commented on how the singing of hymns and assisting with readings made a very positive contribution to the service. Liturgy leaders take their role very seriously, undertaking, preparing and leading celebrations enthusiastically.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the daily lives of the whole school community and all staff are committed to ensuring that pupils are provided with meaningful experiences. Opportunities to celebrate key moments in the liturgical year are celebrated in school or in the local parish church with members of the wider parish community. The parish priest visits school regularly to celebrate liturgies such as Ash Wednesday services, the Sacrament of Reconciliation for older pupils, and a Sorry Service for younger pupils. In addition to the Nativity celebrations held in school, the school holds its carol services in the parish church. Joining with the parish community for these events and for Mass, not only strengthens the links with the wider community but allows pupils to serve the community as readers and

altar servers. Pupils prepare and lead a variety of celebrations for peers and parents, including praying the Rosary during October and May. The outdoor prayer area is a wonderful place to pray and celebrate this. Two beautiful indoor prayer areas also provide pupils with a calm, tranquil space in which to sit and reflect, and spend time talking to God. Favourite passages from scripture decorate the walls and cushions of these spaces, further enhancing the prayer experiences for the community.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is well formulated and clearly sets out its expectations, and there is an annual review programme to evaluate prayer and its impact. School leaders ensure the school calendar reflects the liturgical year which results in opportunities for pupils to celebrate key events such as Holy Days of Obligation, the school's Feast Day and celebration assemblies to mark the saints of the United Kingdom. In addition, pupils making their First Holy Communion celebrate with a Mass in school and Year 6 leavers prepare and lead a celebration to mark their time in school. School leaders and governors ensure the prayer and liturgy are given a high profile when allocating resources. They ensure that staff are provided with opportunities to attend training to support them in planning and leading high-quality experiences of prayer and liturgy for pupils. The head teacher and governors give priority to the resourcing of prayer and liturgy when allocating budgets.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Helen's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	146015
Full postal address of the school	North Road, Westcliff on Sea.SS0 7AY
School phone number	01702 343823
Name of head teacher or principal	Mrs Elizabeth Mouchel
Chair of governing board	Elsa Corr
School Website	https://www.st-helens.southend.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Assisi Catholic Trust
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	4 - 11
Trustees	The Diocese of Brentwood
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	9 December 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Mrs Angela Podmore	Lead inspector
Mrs Sheila Birtles	Team inspector
Name of inspector	Lead/team
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