



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: The Ursuline Preparatory School, Ilford

LEA: London Borough of Redbridge

Inspection Date: 6th November 2015

Reporting Inspector: Pamela Brannigan

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

Type of School: Primary
School Category: Independent
Age range of pupils: 3 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 141
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: 4th July 2008

School Address:
2-8 Coventry Road
Ilford
Essex
IG1 4QR

Tel. No. 020 8518 4050
Headteacher: Mrs L. McCoy
Chair of Governors: Mr P Nicholson

Information about the school

The Ursuline Preparatory School is a Catholic independent school in Ilford town centre under the trusteeship of the Ursuline Sisters and part of the diocese of Brentwood. Pupils come from Ilford itself and adjoining areas. There are currently 141 pupils in the main school and 43 full and part time pupils in the nursery. The proportion of Catholic pupils is 18.4%. Although the majority of pupils come from other Christian denominations or other faith backgrounds, the school has retained its Catholic ethos which is well supported by its parent body.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Causing concern

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

The Ursuline Preparatory School is outstanding in providing Catholic education and in its success in providing experiences in ways of Catholic living and believing. Pupil achievement and progress and the provision for Catholic life are judged to be outstanding. Prayer, worship and opportunities for spiritual and moral development are interwoven through religious education and the wider curriculum. Pupils clearly understand that they are part of a Catholic community. The headteacher and senior leaders are excellent role models and have put in place initiatives linked to the Catholic life of the school. Pastoral care is very good and shared by all members of the school community. The school maintains good links with the local parish of St John the Baptist with regular visits to the church. Relationships are very good within the school and pupils feel safe and well cared for. Parents greatly appreciate the many opportunities offered to develop a wide range of interests through before and after school clubs and lunch time activities. Parents also welcome the high standard of care and the way their children are supported. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards of attainment are in line with or exceed diocesan expectations.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement. Governors and trustees are currently evaluating plans for the future which should ensure the school continues to thrive. The last inspection in 2008 identified no areas for development other than those already stated by the school in its self evaluation. Since then standards in religious education have continued to rise as the school has adopted the 'Come and See' programme for religious education. The school has developed the use of interactive resources, new ideas and technologies to further enhance classroom education. The school has effective strategies to share good practice and support new teachers.

The headteacher, 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. The headteacher ensures that all staff are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and improve their skills through staff meetings and attendance at diocesan led training. She attends termly deanery meetings which are sometimes hosted by the school. Good support is given to new and non Catholic teachers. One teacher holds the CCRS qualification and one more is currently undertaking the course.

The current leadership has a very good capacity to maintain effectiveness. The headteacher shows very good leadership of a Catholic community through her commitment to all aspects of school life. Prayer and worship are woven throughout the school day and enhanced by the Ursuline sister who is also link governor for religious education. Governors are dedicated, well informed, have a wide range of expertise and are fully involved in the life of the school. Accurate self-evaluation has enabled the school to identify areas for improvement and strengthen initiatives which lead to good outcomes for all pupils. The experienced religious education subject leader is very well placed to support colleagues through monitoring and help with planning. She has attended diocesan training linked to the religious education scheme 'Come and See' which she has disseminated to colleagues.

What the school should do to improve further

Continue to implement areas identified in the School Improvement Plan.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Pupil attainment and progress in religious education are very good. The school carefully evaluates achievement which indicates that pupils make good progress year on year so that by the time they reach Year 6 attainment reaches and sometimes exceeds diocesan expectations. Lessons observed during the inspection were good or outstanding and pupils worked with interest and commitment. Cross curricular links are evident especially in Early Years where teachers provide a good foundation which is built on throughout the years. In Key Stage 1 tasks are carefully differentiated so higher achievers are given opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge. This is built on in Key Stage 2 where pupils are confident in finding bible references and using them in their written work. Behaviour for learning is excellent and results in well motivated and responsive pupils. In conversation pupils said they enjoy their religious education lessons and like the wide range of activities involved. They are eager to participate and work well together whether in groups or pairs. They have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and are able to apply religious ideas to their own lives. Most workbooks show coverage of the curriculum and indicate good progress made by all groups.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school through the way they help and support each other both in and out of the classrooms. The mission statement is known by pupils who are given many opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. They are keen to take on responsibilities including membership of the School Council, eco committee, and as liturgy representatives. Pupils are involved with several local, national and international charities including Cafod, 'Love in a Box' and the local food bank. Pupils are encouraged to see themselves as part of a global community with responsibilities for other people and the environment. There is respect for cultural differences within the school where pupils value adults and each other. They appreciate the sense of community and belonging created within the school. Conversations with pupils indicated that they value the opportunities offered and the help given by their teachers.

Prayer and worship are central to school life. Liturgies, masses and celebrations are open to parents and are carefully planned by pupils and staff. There are many opportunities for all pupils to participate fully in assemblies and class acts of worship. Singing is very good with an enthusiastic school choir which plays a major part in worship. Pupils have a good knowledge of the Church's liturgical year with its seasons and celebrations. The environment for prayer and worship is excellent. Each class has a prayer table which is used as a focus for daily worship. Pupils are developing the ability to pray in different ways and at different times. They can use scripture, the traditional prayers of the church, meditation and their own prayers, examples of which were seen during the inspection. Pupils' own prayers are used in masses and assemblies. Older pupils are able to apply aspects of Jesus' life and teaching to their own lives and understand that a sense of service is part of being a member of a Catholic community.

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 that all members of staff are there to help. Pupils are involved in decision making and citizenship through the school council and value their school and all it offers. They know they are respected, listened to and encouraged to help each other. Through questionnaires parents praise the excellent quality of education, the high level of pastoral care and the commitment and approachability of staff.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

The effectiveness of leadership is outstanding. The headteacher is well supported by her deputy and subject leader as she demonstrates leadership of the school through the way she inspires and promotes the provision for Catholic life. She is committed to excellence and achieves this by regular monitoring and a balance of challenge and support. She communicates a clear vision to the whole community which is affirmed by staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for pupils. The partnership between school and home is good with termly religious education newsletters and invitations to liturgies and assemblies. The leadership team give

priority to Catholic Life and religious education in the school improvement plan and have developed a system of self-evaluation and tracking which is detailed and accurate. Together they have a very good knowledge of areas for development in religious education and are well placed to support colleagues.

The subject leader monitors religious education by means of lesson observations, work scrutiny and joint planning which is followed by feedback to individual teachers. She supports colleagues when necessary and leads staff meetings linked to religious education. She attends diocesan conferences and training sessions which she disseminates to colleagues. The school has put in place strategies to give further challenge to all groups of pupils. Staff development has a high priority.

Governors are active in the life of the school and are involved with the review of policy and procedure. They work closely with senior leadership and have a very good understanding of strengths and areas for development. They are very well informed about the life of the school through the headteacher's report, feedback from the link governor and frequent visits. They are in a good position to challenge and support effectively. The Ursuline sister who is also link governor for religious education plays a major role in the life of the school by observing and evaluating provision. All governors share the strong sense of the vision and educational mission of the school.

Leaders ensure that the school is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. Other faiths are well taught. There are good links with the neighbouring secondary school and other Ursuline schools. The curriculum is enhanced through effective links with the local parish. Pupils are given opportunities to show leadership within the school and suggest areas of charitable fund raising and involvement in the local and wider community. Older pupils are developing an understanding of the theology underpinning this work. Opportunities for spiritual development ensure that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences. Regular retreat days are held for Year 6 pupils.

Provision

Grade 1

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is excellent. During the inspection, lessons observed were good or outstanding. They are planned carefully with clear learning intentions and a varied range of activities. The school has made a major investment in resources including sets of bibles for Key Stage 2 which has led to very good familiarity with scripture. Pupils benefit from the high profile given throughout the school to religious education lessons. In all classes observed pupils were fully engaged and made very good progress. Teachers respond well to pupils' comments and take every opportunity to develop understanding. Higher order questioning was evident in lessons observed. Marking is positive, interactive and enables pupils to identify next steps in their learning. Very good monitoring, assessment, planning and tracking supports the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is outstanding. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The religious education programme 'Come and See' has been in place for two years and is now embedded. The headteacher gives religious education a central place in the life of the school and this is demonstrated by the budget devoted to it and the current level of resources. 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 their environment. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development. The support given to families through a wide range of extra curricular activities gives a strong sense of community to the school. There is every indication that current high standards are likely to be maintained or improved.

Provision for prayer and worship in the school are outstanding. Eucharistic celebrations, prayer and liturgies are central to the life of the school. They are very well planned and contribute greatly to pupils' spiritual development. They often include visual presentations, bible readings drama, singing and music. During the inspection a Year 6 assembly focused on Remembrance and recounted the events of World War 2. The assembly included prayers, reflections and well sung hymns. A number of parents were present. Masses in school or at St John the Baptist church involve pupils as altar servers, readers, offertory procession and choir. Reconciliation during Lent, Ash Wednesday, Harvest and a range of other celebrations are held at key times of the year and parents are invited to all of these. A new prayer room is available for pupils at lunchtimes, supervised by Year 6 liturgy representatives. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 attend a 2 day retreat at the beginning of the academic year.

The learning environment is good. Each classroom has a prayer focus with religious artefacts and display boards which include children's work. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their knowledge of Catholic traditions including participation in the Rosary in May and October. The enthusiasm which pupils show during collective worship indicates that they understand that faith is at the heart of the school.

The inspector would like to express her thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.