



## **DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD**

### **Inspection Report**

**Name of School:** St John Payne Catholic School

**LEA:** Essex

**Inspection Date:** 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017

**Reporting Inspectors:** Mr P. Ward (Lead)  
Mr D. Fox

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

**Type of School:** Secondary  
**School Category:** Voluntary Aided  
**Age range of pupils:** 11 - 18  
**Gender of pupils:** Mixed  
**Number on roll:** 1130  
**Appropriate Authority:** The Governing Body  
**Date of previous inspection:** December 2011

**School Address:**  
Patching Hall Lane  
Chelmsford  
Essex  
CM1 4BS

**Tel. No.** 01245 256030  
**Headteacher:** Mr A. Schular  
**Chair of Governors:** Mr M. Frost

## **Information about the school** taken from school SEF and 2016 Ofsted report

St John Payne Catholic School is a Catholic Voluntary Aided mixed comprehensive school in Chelmsford in the county of Essex and serves the Mid-Essex Deanery of the Diocese of Brentwood. The catchment area consists of all the Catholic primary schools in the Deanery. Pupils are also drawn from other primary schools locally. The removal of subsidised bus transport has impacted on the accessibility of the school for families who live some distance from the school. The school is larger than average secondary schools. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan, is above the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average.

### **Key grades for inspection**

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

## **Overall**

**Grade 2**

St John Payne is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. Pupils identify strongly with their school and its manifest Catholic values which are constantly refreshed and revived through its well-planned provision of prayer and worship opportunities facilitated by the school chaplain and pupil members of the chaplaincy. Together with the religious education programme this enables pupils to develop spiritually and become religiously literate in an age appropriate manner.

Leaders, governors and managers demonstrate a strong commitment to the Church's mission in education. Governors are supportive of the school and well informed of progress and areas of development. The headteacher's commitment to Catholic education is manifest, exemplified in part by his weekly school assemblies reflecting upon the Sunday readings. He is ably supported by a governing body and senior leadership team determined constantly to develop the Catholic character of the school and its academic achievements. Religious Education is recognised as a core subject and is among the strongest achieving departments in the school. Pastoral care is very strong.

Relationships within the school are very good and students feel well cared for and supported in their learning. Parents used the opportunity of the Inspection survey to comment on a number of features of school life.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

Ensure that the provision of Religious Education is of the highest standard by providing a coherent and challenging curriculum in line with diocesan expectations and by providing teaching that is regularly outstanding.

Raise standards of Religious Education through the systematic and rigorous monitoring of reliable student attainment data.

Improve the effectiveness of the monitoring, evaluation and review of the Catholic life to further enhance its provision.

## Outcomes

## Grade 1

Standards of attainment have increased significantly on 2014 and in recent years remain broadly consistent with about 25% of pupils achieving grades A\*/A and 70% grades A\*-C in GCSE Religious Studies, placing it among the best subjects in the school. GCE results have also improved over this time, 50% gaining A\*-B at Advanced Level in 2017. A review of pupils' books confirms school data indicating that pupils generally make at least expected progress throughout the school but the introduction of new assessment measure compatible with the new GCSE assessment criteria makes detailed comparison over time impossible. The religious literacy of pupils develops steadily throughout their school career, one inspector being impressed by that displayed by a group of Sixth Form students. Lesson observations confirmed the school judgement that most pupils have a positive attitude to Religious Education lessons and make good progress when teaching is precisely targeted to their needs. This was well demonstrated in a GCE lesson in which the teacher engaged pupils in a lively exploration of contrasting philosophical views of free will.

Pupils are proud to be members of the school and willingly take on responsibilities and participate constructively in the wider Catholic life of the school. This takes many forms that contribute positively to the life of the school community and its individual members. In addition to form captains and vice-captains, the latter with a particular responsibility for prayer and spirituality, there are anti-bullying ambassadors and sixth form prefects who exercise a number of roles including supporting the school chaplaincy. Pupils who are cadets in the armed services take an active part in the Remembrance assemblies and in promoting the poppy appeal. Fund raising and charitable giving is a particular strength of the school: the school is the third biggest school contributor to Cafod and supports many other causes often selected by pupils including CHESS (Churches Homeless Emergency Support Scheme). One pupil told an inspector 'teachers make fund raising fun!' Operation Christmas Child which involves providing gifts to children who might otherwise receive no Christmas gift was coming to its climax during the inspection. A long-established link with HCPT involves senior pupils accompanying disabled children to Lourdes each year, funding themselves with some support from the Catenians. Inspectors found that pupils treat one another with respect and appreciate that actions have consequences. They feel safe and know that incidents are dealt with promptly and effectively by school leaders.

Pupils confirm that prayer, assemblies and Mass are a significant part of their school lives, irrespective of their personal beliefs. The weekly cycle of form prayer, assemblies and Friday mass enables pupils to volunteer to participate in many roles including leading prayer, Scripture reading at assembly and composing and writing bidding prayers for the voluntary Mass which each class takes in turn to prepare and celebrate. Pupil participation is to the fore in tutor groups where they often compose or select prayers and lead in prayer and worship. The form prayer board is a significant feature and pupils are at ease adding prayer intentions.

Bible reflection is held weekly in tutor groups and provides pupils with the opportunity to be introduced to, explore and reflect upon the following Sunday's readings. One inspector observed pupils in a Year 8 tutor group engage readily in prayer and reflection in response to powerpoint presentation and questioning by the tutor and reviewed a record book written by different pupils of each reflection since the beginning of Year 7. Pupils also contribute in very many ways to the celebration of school Masses as well as devising and participating in major liturgies including Advent and Lent. The weekly Chaplaincy pupil meditation attracts numbers of pupils from all year groups to the school chapel, two meditations during the inspection involving well over thirty pupils.

## **Leaders and Managers**

## **Grade 2**

Leaders, governors and managers demonstrate a commitment to the Church's mission in education. Governors are well informed through the headteacher's reports and focused school visits, together with committee reports that rigorously analyse reports and data. They have a clear vision for the future development of the school.

Weekly assemblies by the headteacher reflecting on the Sunday readings exemplify his commitment to leading a Catholic Christian school that promotes the personal and spiritual as well as academic growth of all. This is shared with staff through training days that have explored spirituality, prayer and the Church which included contributions from the local parish priest and the school chaplain. Induction of new staff includes an introduction to the mission of the school and in leading prayer. Chaplaincy is an important feature of the school and has a dedicated link governor who takes an active interest in its work. It is based in a centrally located centre complementing the well-appointed school chapel. While the school chaplain is on maternity leave, the school strove successfully to find an interim appointment in order to maintain this key role in the school. She is continuing and even developing the established role which includes providing prayer resources and guidance in the preparation of liturgies, encouraging greater participation by pupils in liturgies and supporting bereaved pupils. Older pupils confirmed their appreciation of her contribution. One demonstrated how through their engagement with the Chaplaincy they had gained confidence to show empathetic support of a younger pupil. The established pattern of senior leaders reviewing each major school liturgy with a view to future improvement continues. One recently led to changes to the arrangement of Mass on Holy Days of obligation.

Religious Education is line managed by the headteacher and monitored by the Governors in common with all departments. Regular learning walks and lesson observations together with analysis of assessment and attainment data ensures that school leaders have a good knowledge of the department in order to take steps to further enhance pupil progress. The head of department is an experienced and committed leader who is successfully leading a team of six teachers to introduce the new GCSE and GCE religious studies specifications and

assessment criteria. She is also adapting the Key Stage 3 curriculum in light of the new GCSE specification and the beginning of its teaching in Year 9. Further, new assessment criteria are being introduced, in common with History and Geography that are designed to provide pupils with an indication of the progress towards GCSE from their first assessment in Year 7. Pupil exercise books contain new summary assessment sheets and pupils confirmed that they understood the system, knew their current grade and what they needed to do to make progress.

## **Provision**

## **Grade 2**

The quality of teaching is good overall with some outstanding features. New assessment procedures have been introduced in place of Levels so that Religious Education along with Geography and History have a common assessment criteria to support progress towards the new GCSE 9-1 examinations in each subject. This enables teachers to plan lessons realistically to promote the learning of pupils. Teachers make considerable use of digital resources, drawing on their subject knowledge to select those appropriate for their pupils. They use a range of pedagogies including active learning, pair and group work by pupils. The effectiveness of teacher questioning in securing knowledge is generally good but less so in promoting understanding and reflection. The best teaching involves detailed lesson planning using excellent teacher subject knowledge and thorough understanding of pupils' attainment to employ a range of resources and pedagogies that constantly engage pupils and secures progress. Other lessons are sometimes teacher dominated as teachers seek to reinforce pupil knowledge and skills. Consequently opportunities for pupils to be independent learners and appropriate knowledge personally are not exploited. Support provided by other adults is effectively deployed. Inspectors witnessed a learning support assistant providing targeted support to enable one pupil to make significant progress during a lesson.

The Religious Education curriculum continues to evolve to meet the needs of pupils and the requirements of the new GCSE and GCE AL RS specifications. Key Stage 3 is based on the diocesan- approved Icons programme but adapted in light of teacher expertise and experience in order to address more appropriately pupils' contemporary context. It is important to ensure that the content continues to reflect the Religious Education Curriculum Directory which is mandated by the Bishops' Conference. The increasing diversity of pupils' religious knowledge and understanding on entry in Year 7 is recognised as a significant factor in future curriculum planning. The new Edexcel GCSE RS specification meets diocesan requirements. Its content and lack of assessment examples is presenting challenges to all schools and has prompted the school to increase collaboration with schools teaching the same specification. This has empowered teachers and in turn enhanced pupil learning. The school meets diocesan requirements for curriculum time in all key stages.

Prayer and worship is central to the life of the school and a key feature of every school celebration. An excellent range and variety of celebrations enables pupils to both deepen their spirituality and employ their personal interests and talents in a variety of ways in devising, leading and celebrating each occasion. Chaplaincy leaders and other sixth form pupils, led by the chaplain, facilitate this very effectively. The themes chosen by pupils and staff reflect a clear understanding of the Church's mission and address the spiritual

aspirations of pupils. The well-planned weekly and annual programme linked to the liturgical cycle prompts the religious and spiritual development of pupils. The weekly cycle includes Friday Mass for a tutor group in the school chapel, open to all, and begins with headteacher assemblies that encourage and enable pupils to reflect on the Sunday readings. Bible meditation devised by the chaplain is another accessible opportunity for pupils to consider scripture, form tutors leading reflection on the text supported by prompt questions all of which are accessed on the classroom television screen. The opportunity of weekly pupil meditation is an example of the optional activities available to pupils. The annual cycle includes a Mass of Welcome for Year 7 pupils and their parents and includes the blessing of the pupils' bibles and leavers' Masses for Years 11 and 13 to which parents are invited. Other regular celebrations of Mass include a termly Mass for each year group and an annual Mass for deceased members of the school community. Deanery priests recognise that serving the school is a pastoral priority but on occasions such as holy days of obligation the timing and arrangements for Mass have to be adapted. The annual programme includes retreats for pupils in Years 7-9, that for Year 7 pupils being held in school with senior pupils participating in the day.