

**SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. GABRIEL'S
CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL
BURY**

Inspection date October 2005

Reporting Inspector Mr. W. Ryan

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic Secondary (Mixed)
Age range of pupils	11-16
Number on roll	1036
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Mr. K. Coen
Headteacher	Mr. E. Robinson
Head of Religious Education	Mrs. C. Crowley
Date of previous inspection	November 1999

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Inadequate
Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school	2	
The quality of Collective Worship	2	
Achievement and standards in Religious Education	2	
The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education	2	
The quality of the Religious Education curriculum	2	
Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education	1	

The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Gabriel's is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic High School for pupils aged 11 to 16. It serves the parishes of Guardian Angels, St. Joseph's Bury, St. Marie's, St. Hilda's and St. Joseph's Ramsbottom. St. Gabriel's was founded to serve the Catholic community of North Bury. It reflects a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds within that area. The school community is largely white with a small number of Irish, Polish and Italian families. In recent years the school has welcomed children whose parents were seeking asylum from Zimbabwe and there are increasing numbers of children from an Afro-Caribbean heritage. Fewer than 3% of learners have English as an additional language. Many families are now sending their second generation of children to the school. The indicative admission number is 209 and the number of learners on roll is 1036. All the learners are Catholics and 7% are eligible for free school meals. 136 learners are identified as having special educational needs with 13 of them having a statement of special educational needs. There are 42 Catholic teachers representing 68% of the total staff.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Gabriel's is good Catholic school. It provides a very good Catholic education for its pupils. The Mission statement is at the heart of its provision. The school is well led by a dedicated chair and board of governors who support an enthusiastic and inspiring headteacher and leadership team. The ethos of the school is that of a caring community working together to value the individual through challenge and respect. The school is a happy place where its members feel valued. Relationships are very good and there is a sense of working together to raise achievement. The pupils are confident, welcoming and very well behaved. They work with teachers and are enthusiastic about what they do. The school recognises its place in the wider community and its involvement in a variety of charitable ventures is commendable. Links with associated primary schools are good as are contacts with the Holy Cross College of Further Education. Provision for prayer and worship is good. Members of the school community pray together frequently and there are opportunities for pupils to take part in voluntary activities such as retreats. The Religious Education department plays an active role in enhancing the spiritual provision for the pupils. Overall standards in Curriculum Religious Education are good. Leadership and Management of the subject are outstanding.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 23 inspection the Religious Education department has promoted further staff development through in-service training. Newly qualified teachers are carefully monitored and supported through partnership with the Manchester Metropolitan University. A staff liturgy group has been established in order to develop the school's liturgical life. There is now a liturgical music group. Form led liturgies, such as Stations of the Cross, are established and a voluntary Mass is celebrated regularly. Residential retreats are a feature of the school calendar.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation and capacity to improve is good. Management at all levels is committed to raising achievement and standards in the school. Learners are being encouraged to manage their own learning and set targets. This process will be developed further. The Religious Education department's action plan has a focus on assessment and raising achievement and is seeking to strengthen links between Key Stages. Additional use of Information Communication Technology also features in the plan.

What the school should do to improve further

- The Governing body should seek to designate one of its members to monitor the spiritual provision for the school and the Religious Education department.
- Further improve the use of Information Communication Technology within the Religious Education department.
- Seek to establish a prayer room in the school to encourage personal prayer and reflection.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the school are good. The governing body is well informed and supports the management of the school in reviewing and monitoring its Christian life. The school Mission Statement underpins everything and the commitment of the chair and the headteacher to the school mission is commendable. All governors' meetings include a review of initiatives concerning the spiritual welfare of the school community. The Catholic family ethos which pervades the school reflects the focus of governors, headteacher and staff in all areas of school life on developing each child as an individual. The governance of the school would benefit from having a designated governor with responsibility for promoting the school as a Catholic community. The Headteacher and senior managers have a clear vision for the school. The School Improvement Plan is comprehensive and focused on raising standards and achievement. The school is conscious of its responsibility to develop awareness of the needs of others and its charity work is a distinctive feature. The Catholic life of the school is effectively evaluated and monitored at all levels.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is good. Prayer and worship are a part of everyday life in the school. There is an expectation that prayer should play a part in the lives of pupils and staff. All meetings and staff briefings begin with prayer which is also a feature of assemblies and form registrations. The pupils respond well and pray with reverence. They also play a major part in liturgical celebrations through reading, singing and dramatic presentations. Heads of year present enriching and inspiring assemblies. Major liturgical events are celebrated throughout the school year. In Advent and Lent services of reconciliation take place and at Christmas a Carol service is celebrated in one of the contributory parishes. Stations of the Cross are followed in school during Holy Week and voluntary Mass is celebrated weekly. Pupils also have the opportunity to experience residential retreats and days of reflection. The newly-formed chaplaincy group will strengthen this provision. Opportunities for personal prayer and reflection could be further developed through the creation of a prayer room.. The school mission is shared by all members of staff and the contribution of non-Catholic colleagues is valued by the governors and management of the school.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education are good. The Head of Department is moving Religious Education forward in the school. Achievement at Key Stage 4 had dipped but is now reaching new heights through the implementation of a number of strategies. The department carefully monitors pupils' attainment and detailed planning which focuses on the pupils' learning and setting arrangements is leading to rising standards. Pupils' work is marked satisfactorily and teaching is monitored by the Head of Department. The pupils are aware of achievement targets and these are challenging across the ability range. The department recognises the need to link the Key Stage 3 programme to the Key Stage 4 syllabus and progress is being made in this area. All pupils at Key Stage 4 will now be entered for the GCSE Religious Studies examination. The provision of a departmental suite of rooms has enabled better communication between teachers and the enhanced facilities have raised the status of the department in the school. The quality of relationships is a strength of the school and pupil-teacher respect ensures that lessons take place in an atmosphere which supports work, values progress and encourages good behaviour. Pupil behaviour throughout the school is very good and leads to improved learning. The Religious Education department is able to call on the assistance of a very well resourced Curriculum Support Department.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Teaching and learning in Religious Education are good. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory, most were good and there were some examples of excellent practice. Planning is good with lesson aims clearly stated and set in context for the learners. Content of lessons is well developed and learners respond well to the stimuli used. A variety of teaching styles is employed. The pupils participate with enthusiasm in their lessons. They respond well to questions and are eager to listen to the opinions and contributions of others. They value the subject and recognise its contribution to their lives on a personal level. The department recognises the need to continue reviewing its programme and lesson content to ensure the pace of lessons is appropriate across the full ability range.

Assessments take place at both Key Stages. At Key Stage 4 pupils complete unit tests, informing revision and target setting. The school has invested in training in raising attainment at Key Stage 4. The department is now developing assessment at Key Stage 3 to involve peer and self-assessment. The recent acquisition of new Information Communication Technology facilities will add to the effective delivery of Religious Education. The head of department plans to make this facility available to all members of the department thereby improving teaching and learning across the board.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Overall the quality of the Religious Education curriculum is good. At Key Stage 3 follows the Diocesan Guidelines. The Department has made some adjustments to previous schemes of work to better fit the needs of its learners and is in the process of reviewing it in order to relate it to the new syllabus at Key Stage 4. The public examination syllabus for Key Stage 4 has been changed in order to make it more relevant to the learners and to improve the opportunities across the full ability range. This has proved successful as examination results across the year have improved and all learners respond well to the new syllabus. In practical terms the programmes of study relate to the outreach work of the school and contributions to a variety of charities find their starting point in the Religious Education curriculum. The content of the curriculum is further strengthened through the daily spiritual provision of the school in assemblies, form time and liturgical celebrations on special occasions. Members of the department meet fortnightly to review and monitor the programme.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of the Religious Education department is outstanding. The head of department leads with enthusiasm and dedication and is well supported by the senior management of the school and the governors. Members of the department are well qualified and enthusiastic and the relationship between teachers and learners is excellent. The head of department recently made a presentation to the governing body on the department's work. Since being appointed she has led a number of initiatives which have improved Religious Education for the learners. Key Stage 4 examination results have improved to well above the national average and early indications are that they will improve further next year. Learners are set challenging targets and are encouraged to become independent in their learning. Appropriate assessment procedures are in place. The Key Stage 3 syllabus has been reviewed and modified to suit the learners' needs. Provision for Information Communication Technology in the department has been substantially improved and plans are in place to dovetail its use into the curriculum. Throughout the past year in-service training has been comprehensive and has impacted significantly on teaching and learning. There is a concern that the pace of learning is not suitable for all and this will be addressed within the department. The department evaluates and monitors its work well. This informs its planning and impacts on the school's overall provision