

**SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. JOSEPH'S
ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Queen Street Ramsbottom Bury BL0 9JJ**

Inspection date January 2009

Reporting Inspector Mrs. Mary McGrail

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

Type of School Catholic Primary
 URN 105343
 Age range of pupils 3-11
 Number on roll 184
 Appropriate authority The governing body
 Chair of Governors Mr. William McSorley
 Headteacher Mrs. Pauline Leatherbarrow
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Mr. Neil Price
 Date of previous inspection November 2005

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

The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Joseph's is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of St. Joseph in Ramsbottom north of the larger town of Bury. The school is situated in a residential area of the town where accommodation is mainly private houses with a small number of council owned properties. The majority of learners live in the parish. Few learners come from homes with socio-economic problems. The age range of the learners is 3 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 30 and there are currently 184 learners on roll plus a nursery with 25 full time equivalent places. 172 learners are baptised Catholics. 2.8% are eligible for free school meals. 25 learners have been identified as having special educational needs with 6 having a statutory statement of special educational need. 9 of the 10 teachers (90%) are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Joseph's is an outstanding school. It is highly effective in offering its learners a traditional Catholic education in a caring, supportive and happy environment. Throughout the school community there is a strong sense of shared commitment and team work from all involved in this very successful school. The school is firmly at the heart of the parish it serves. Parents are very supportive of the school. Learners enjoy coming to school and work hard to meet the high expectations of the staff. They are friendly, polite and extremely well behaved at all times. The excellent support of the parish priest is acknowledged and appreciated by staff, learners and parents. The informed governing body, which gives strong support to the school, is well lead by the chair. The dedicated headteacher gives very good leadership to her hardworking staff. The celebration of Mass is central to the life of the school. Prayer and collective worship have a high profile in school. The school Mission Statement based on "Faith, Hope and Love" is on prominent display throughout the school and permeates all aspects of the life of the school. The school is very successful in promoting the spiritual, moral social and cultural development of its learners. The school continues to develop its strong links with the wider community.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 48 inspection in 2005 the school has addressed the issues identified and successfully resolved them. A new deputy head was appointed in September 2007 following the promotion to headship of the previous post holder. The Foundation Stage outside play area has been refurbished and a canopy installed.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is very detailed, accurate and honest. The headteacher, senior management team and all staff, fully supported by the governing body, share a clear vision for the future development of this successful school. They have the determination, knowledge and commitment to realise this vision. The capacity to improve is therefore outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no issues to address. The school is encouraged to continue to provide its learners with the high quality Religious Education provision in an ethos where Faith, Hope and Love of God directs its daily life.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The school has a clear and precise Mission Statement which is at the forefront of all policies and permeates all aspects of the life of the school. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor, providing a wealth of practical and positive support to the school in its daily life. The governors, who are also regular visitors to the school, are committed to employing Catholic teachers to the school. They are kept well informed of the overall provision by the headteacher's regular and detailed reports. These reports are a result of the careful and systematic monitoring of the provision by the headteacher and Religious Education co-ordinator. The chair of governors and the designated governor for Religious Education now take an increasing role in evaluating the provision and have an input into identifying areas for improvement. Regular meetings are held with the headteacher and Religious Education co-ordinator. The school gives very good support to the parish organised Sacramental Programme which is recognised as a very successful aspect of parish life. The majority of teachers either hold, or are in the process of acquiring, the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies qualification. The school is not complacent and is in the process of inaugurating a parents' council to allow parents a greater involvement in further developing the religious life of the school. The school continues to develop its strong links with the wider community.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is outstanding. Throughout the year learners, parents, staff and parishioners are given a wide range of rich and meaningful opportunities to develop their relationship with God. The school has a policy statement for prayer and worship which is regularly reviewed. The Eucharist is central to the life of the school. Whole school Masses are celebrated in church for special Feast Days. Class Masses are celebrated for Key Stage 2 learners each term. In all these celebrations learners are fully involved through music, readings and prayers. Prayer has a high profile in school. Learners are familiar with the traditional prayers of the church but are happy to share their own spontaneous prayers with others. Communal, silent and reflective prayer are features of the learners' prayer life. In all prayers observed during inspection learners were reverent and respectful. The celebration, held in church to mark the birth of Christ was an excellent example of the whole parish community coming together in a joyful, spiritual acknowledgement of God's love for us. Well planned assemblies, led by the senior management team are held weekly. Special "praise" assemblies are held weekly when parents, governors and parishioners are invited into school to celebrate achievement. Assembly themes involve other faith celebrations. Classes lead these in prayer on a rota basis. Class collective worship is a significant feature of the school's provision. The worship attended in Year 3 was a genuine spiritual experience for all involved. No learners have been withdrawn from collective worship although one learner does not attend school Masses.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are outstanding. Learners enter the Foundation Stage with attainment in line with national expectations. Throughout and within all key stages they make very good progress and by the end of Key Stage 2 their attainment is above national expectations. The learners have a very good factual knowledge of their faith relative to their age. They discuss their ideas using very good religious vocabulary and express their opinions in an articulate manner. They take pride in their presentations. They discuss moral issues in a mature and sensible manner. Both younger learners writing their simple prayers of thanks to God and the oldest writing their poems about their future hopes demonstrate high achievement. The learners appreciate their input into school decisions through their class and school councils. The older learners accept their responsibility to care for the younger ones. They in turn enjoy playing the games arranged for them. The learners understand their duty to care for the less fortunate in society and give generous support to local, national and international charities. Through their involvement in the wider community the learners are learning how to develop as caring citizens of the future.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspector agrees with the school that teaching and learning in Religious Education are outstanding. Teachers plan their lessons very carefully and use well prepared resources effectively to enhance the learning process. Lessons have a clear focus and a range of teaching strategies is used to reflect the content of the lesson and the age of the learners. Lessons have pace and plenary sessions are used to bring lessons to an appropriate conclusion. There is a good mix of direct teacher input, meaningful discussions and tasks are set which meet the needs of all learners. Those learners who need extra help are well supported by teaching assistants. Technology is well used by teachers and learners. All work is very well marked and extra effort is praised. Questions are posed to extend learning and suggestions are made for how work may be improved. Assessments are a component part of teaching and individual tracking of learners' progress has begun. It is intended to develop a file of levelled work for moderation. Learners have very good attitudes to their learning. They listen attentively to all inputs, discuss their ideas sensibly and take great pride in their presentations. They keep on task until their work is complete and work well in pairs, small groups and in the larger class group. At all times their behaviour is excellent and they show enthusiasm and interest in their learning.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. The school has a policy statement for curriculum Religious Education. All lessons are planned using the diocesan *REvision 2000* and the developing *Moving the Vision On* schemes. Through its own procedures the school has evaluated the likely impact of the developing curriculum and is now well prepared to implement future changes. Time allocated to curriculum Religious Education meets both national and diocesan requirements. Teachers evaluate the Religious Education curriculum on a half termly basis. The diocesan World Faiths programme is used in Key Stage 2. Visitors are invited into school to speak about their own personal faith and learners have visited a local Islamic Higher Education establishment to widen their understanding of other faith communities. The Religious Education curriculum is supported by cross curricular links with other subjects including literacy, science and environmental issues. All these activities support the school in its contribution to community cohesion. The parish priest, through his regular visits to the classrooms and his input into the high quality worship opportunities offered to the learners, makes an excellent contribution to the Religious Education curriculum. Very good use is made of the parish church for visits and liturgical celebrations throughout the year and the parish Sacramental Programme makes a positive contribution to the overall provision. The Religious Education curriculum makes a major contribution to the quality of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the learners. Parents are well informed about the topics their children will be covering each term. No learner is withdrawn from Religious Education lessons.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school has evaluated this as outstanding and the inspector agrees with this judgement. The Religious Education co-ordinator has been in post for two years. With the strong support of the headteacher he has set clear priorities for the development of the Religious Education curriculum after evaluating the issues identified in the last inspection. His involvement in the diocesan working party revising the Key Stage 2 curriculum is ensuring successful implementation of the new curriculum in his own school. Resources have been supplemented to meet the new requirements. The co-ordinator attends diocesan training for his own continuing professional development and ensures that colleagues are kept updated on new initiatives. With the support of the headteacher, he monitors the provision and keeps the governing body informed through regular meetings with the designated governor for Religious Education. His subject file is very well maintained. Resources have been purchased to strengthen collective worship and every class has a designated focal point for prayer which is well used. Displays throughout the school clearly reflect its faith life.