

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parish of St Gregory in Farnworth. The school draws pupils from an area of rented, private and council owned property in which there are high levels of both social and economic disadvantage. There are currently 37 pupils in the school who live outside the parish. Attainment of many pupils on entry is average in social and communication skills. The age range of pupils is from 4 to 11 years. The school's admission number is 30. There are currently 189 pupils on roll of whom 144 are baptised Catholics. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is 20%. The school has identified 32 pupils as having special educational needs. There are no pupils with a statutory statement of special educational need. There are 8 full time and 1 part time teachers 7 of whom are of the Catholic faith (78%).

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Gregory's is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. The caring ethos and inclusive nature of the school are a reflection of the aims expressed in the school's Mission Statement. They are a firm foundation for the happy environment in which the worth and self esteem of all members of the school community and its extended parish family are valued and nurtured. Good relationships between staff and pupils are strength. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners is good. The planning, monitoring and the resources supporting the Religious Education curriculum are good. High quality assemblies and meaningful classroom worship give good support to the curriculum. Pupils are well motivated and behaviour is very good. The head teacher has assessed the leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school, the quality of collective worship and the leadership and management of the Religious Education curriculum to be good. Inspection evidence gathered however indicates these areas to be of outstanding quality.

Improvement since the last inspection.

Since the last inspection the school has undergone a number of changes in staff personnel with the appointment of two newly qualified teachers. The Key Issues raised in the last Section 23 Inspection have been addressed. Improved recording and assessment procedures are ongoing. There is now a wider range of opportunities for pupils to plan and participate in Masses and liturgical services within school and the parish community. The strong team supporting the head teacher in the leadership and management of the school makes a positive impact on the strength of support for their colleagues. Governors and parents are well-informed regarding curriculum provision and the progress of pupils.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is good. The headteacher and the leadership team have a positive vision for future developments in the school and receive good support from the governing body. They are committed to the continuing development of all aspects of the Catholicity of the school through effective provision of in-service training for all staff along with the monitoring of the curriculum and prayer and worship. Each member of the school community is fully aware of the goals the school is aiming to achieve. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish the process of moderation of pupils' assessment tasks in order to create an agreed standard of the levels at which pupils are working.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. All aspects of the daily life and work of the school reflect the aims expressed in its Mission Statement which is displayed in prominent places around the school. The leadership team promotes a positive ethos in which staff, governors and parents work together to ensure pupils develop to their full potential in a true Christian environment where all are valued. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor in the school playing an important role in the religious life of the pupils. The governors are well informed on aspects of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school through headteacher reports, discussions with the co-ordinator and their regular attendance at assemblies and religious celebrations. The chair of governors meets regularly with the headteacher. Good relationships between the home, school and parish family are a strength. Partnership with parents is further encouraged through newsletters, parent evenings and information regarding the progress of their children. Parents regularly share in school Masses, assemblies and liturgical celebrations and many express their enjoyment of these celebrations through their written comments in the Golden Book. As a member of the Catholic network of schools, links with other schools have been developed. The school plays a supporting role in the preparation of pupils for the Sacraments of Initiation and further extends links with the wider community through its support of various local and worldwide charities.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The provision for collective worship in the school is outstanding. A range of opportunities for pupils to lead collective worship within the school and parish community makes a significant contribution in promoting a living Christian faith. Each opportunity is carefully planned, organised, recorded and celebrated. From an early age pupils are actively involved in whole school assemblies which are attended by parents and parishioners many of whom write appreciative comments in the Golden Book. Whole school and class Masses whose themes are linked to the liturgical calendar or topics from the religious curriculum are a regular and integral part of the pupils' prayer life. The pupils of other faiths are always included in the school's celebrations. In all worship observed during inspection the pupils prayed with reverence and respect showing a growing awareness of the importance of prayer in their lives. Classrooms and corridors have a focus area for prayer and worship where examples of pupils' work are displayed. "Families" was the theme of classroom worship observed in Year 2. As the children gathered each person presented a brick bearing their name. This was mounted in the outline of a house by the teaching assistant. Following the opening prayer pupils recalled the story of Jesus being presented to God in the temple. A lovely account of independent writing retelling the story was read by a young pupil. Several pupils then offered their own written and spontaneous prayers. A slide show of family groups encouraged the pupils to express how members of their own families help them. The worship was enhanced by the delightful singing of well chosen appropriate songs.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good. The level of attainment when pupils enter the school is below average. Throughout Foundation Stage pupils make good progress so that by the end of Key Stage 1 progress is in line with that expected in the diocesan programme of work. In Key Stage 2 the rate of pupil progress is variable but in Year 6 the progress and achievement of the pupils in the lesson observed was good. In all lessons observed during the inspection learners were able to build on their prior knowledge and attainment. They were good listeners, eager to share ideas and responded well to questioning. They worked well with "talk partners", enjoyed class and group discussions and generally settled quickly to challenging tasks. Activities set by the teachers were well matched to pupil's age and ability. Teachers involve their support assistants in the lessons so enabling learners to achieve at an appropriate level. By the end of Key Stage 1 learners are beginning to write short sentences of independent work. In areas of Key stage 2 when there is excessive use of work sheets the development of independent writing is slow. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils record their work in a wide variety of forms. However there is a variation in the standard of the presentation of work across Key Stage 2. In Reception, using a model church the children enjoyed identifying items they had seen on a recent visit to the church including the baptismal font. They were encouraged to find out information about their own Baptism. Key Stage 2 learners have a growing awareness of the beliefs and values of their faith and are able to relate them to their own life experiences. They recognise that everyone has a special vocation in life and an invitation as Christians to follow Jesus and aware that following his example often involves making difficult choices.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning overall is good with some outstanding features in both key stages. In the lessons observed teachers had high expectations of their pupils and used a range of techniques and resources to encourage, develop and support learning. Support staff played an important role within the classroom and had a positive impact on the behaviour of the pupils. The effective use of white boards and information communication technology create interest and enjoyment in the classroom. Good classroom management skills using praise and encouragement feature strongly and pupils respond with enthusiasm and achieve well. Teacher's planning identifies clear learning objectives and teaching strategies but as yet not all plans identify any evaluation of their teaching or of their pupils' achievement. The half-termly assessment tasks from *REvision 2000* are completed. All staff indicate the level at which they feel their pupils are working. However the school is encouraged to develop further the work of moderating assessment tasks in order to determine more accurately the levels at which pupils are working. Teaching areas are bright and stimulating learning environments with colourful displays of pupils' work. A very good example of teaching occurred in Year 6. A brief re-cap of the work of St John Bosco was followed by several one minute opportunities for pupils to discuss with a partner the results of their own research into his life. Using various resource materials, pupils had discovered many details about his life and work and were eager to share them with the class. They were encouraged to compare John Bosco's work with boys with the work of Jesus who recognised the goodness in all people seeing past their weaknesses. As John Bosco was the founder of the Salesian Order links were then made to an associated high school, Thornleigh College, and its web site. Links with Literacy skills were made before a challenging activity was set to write a newspaper report given the headline "Boys rescued from a life of crime". The teacher's high expectations of her pupils play an important role in the development of their mature attitudes to their work.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The curriculum for Religious Education is good. Time allocated to Religious Education lessons is in line with national and diocesan requirements. Teachers are knowledgeable and confident in the consistency of their delivery of *REvision 2000*. Timetabling of lessons ensures quality time is allowed to enable pupils to produce work of a good standard. Teaching assistants play an important role supporting staff and pupils within the classroom. Good resources and the development of information communication technology give valuable support to the curriculum. School Masses, assemblies and liturgical celebrations have a positive impact in supporting, enriching and extending the Religious Education curriculum at the school. The school is developing its delivery of World Faiths and organises a multi-faith assembly every term making a valuable contribution to cohesion within the school. The school plays an important role in supporting the parish catechists in the Sacramental Programme.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are outstanding. Working closely together the headteacher, Religious Education co-ordinator and staff share a vision for the on-going development of curriculum Religious Education as a priority affecting the life and work of the school. As a team they are committed to ensuring the caring Christian ethos permeates all aspects of school life. Scrutiny of planning and learners' workbooks is a firmly established procedure whilst the monitoring of teaching and learning through observations is in its early stages. Assessment procedures are also in place and the development of a moderation process will result in a clearer indication of the level at which each pupil is working. The coordinator works hard and is highly successful in introducing new initiatives into the school, supporting staff and modelling good practice. Following her attendance at diocesan training she leads in-house training aimed at encouraging all staff to challenge their own practice and be adventurous and creative in their delivery of the curriculum. Governors regularly visit the school for occasions of prayer and worship. The parish priest is a welcome visitor in school and plays an active role in the religious life of the school community.