

**SALFORD DIOCESE  
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. JAMES-the-LESS  
ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL  
Unity Way Rawtenstall Lancashire BB4 8SU**

Inspection date November 2007

Reporting Inspector Mr J. Brierley

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

Type of School	Catholic Primary
URN	119665
Age range of pupils	4-11
Number on roll	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Rev. Fr D. Lupton
Headteacher	Mr J. A. Mooney
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Miss J. McIntyre
Date of previous inspection	May 2003

<b>The Inspection judgements are:</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Explanation of the Grades</b>  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	2	
The quality of the Religious Education curriculum	1	
Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education	2	
<i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i>		

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

St James-the-Less is a one form entry Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford serving the parish of St James-the-Less. The majority of the pupils are of white British heritage from a variety of backgrounds. The age range of pupils is from 4-11 years. On starting school children's developments are broadly typical of the age group. The indicative admission number is 30 and there are presently 175 pupils on roll. 173 (99%) of the learners are baptised Catholics. 6.3% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals and 19 (10.5%) pupils have been identified as having special educational needs with 7 (3.8%) children having a statutory statement of special educational need. 8 out of the 8 teachers (100%) are Catholics.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

Overall St James-the-Less is an outstanding Catholic school. The headteacher and chair of governors provide strong leadership and are working hard with the governing body and staff of the school to further develop the very good practice already evident in the school. The Catholic life of the school is a strength producing a warm, welcoming and caring environment in which all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are of a high standard. Pupils are happy, well-behaved, polite and friendly. The children display a very good attitude to learning which is a credit to both themselves and the staff of the school. Children enjoy coming to school and feel safe, secure and valued by the staff. Teaching is good overall with some outstanding teaching observed during the inspection. Pupil achievement in Religious Education is consistently good through both key stages. Members of staff are positive role models for pupils and are dedicated, committed and hard working. Religious Education is planned using the Salford Diocese *REvision 2000* syllabus and supplemented by other Religious Education resources. The children enjoy their education in a very happy and secure atmosphere engendered by the exemplary relationships that exist between all members of the school community. The links between the school and the parish are strengthened by the committed work of the inspirational parish priest who actively ensures that the school and parish are as one. The parish priest celebrates the parish Mass in school once a week as well as on special occasions and feast days and as chair of governors is a regular visitor to the school.

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

Following the last Section 23 inspection in May 2003 the school continues to develop its assessment of curriculum Religious Education by adopting the Salford diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines. The school has recently reviewed its marking policy and is working towards applying it to curriculum Religious Education while improving its resources for teaching about world religions and people of other faiths.

### **Capacity to improve**

The school's capacity to improve is good because the headteacher, leadership team and governors have a shared vision for their school and are working closely together to realise that vision. Areas for further development in Religious Education have been identified and strategies to bring about improvements put in place.

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

- Establish, monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the Salford Diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education in the light of the revised Diocesan syllabus.
- Continue to raise standards of achievement by applying the school's recently reviewed marking policy in curriculum Religious Education
- Establish a programme for monitoring teaching and learning in curriculum Religious Education as a means of maintaining standards.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL**

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The chair of governors leads the governing body in their strong support and encouragement of the headteacher and leadership team in the very effective promotion of the Catholic life of the school. The governing body governs the school effectively through its committee structure. Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school are at the top of the curriculum committee's agenda at each meeting. Strong links between the school, home and church are fostered by the dedicated work of the parish priest and the staff of the school. The parish priest is a frequent visitor to the school and celebrates Mass in school every Tuesday as a means of ensuring that children know they are part of the parish. The children know their priest and he knows them. Community cohesion is an important feature of the school's philosophy. When the 'new' school was built the parish priest successfully expressed the parish's and school's wish to have the street, on which the school is built, named Unity Way, as a symbol of community cohesion. The governors have set the headteacher the objective of developing community links between the school and ethnic minorities within the local community. The Mission Statement's claim that "Our school is a Catholic School where our faith is taught, lived and celebrated"- is in evidence throughout the school. The school has an elected school council and during inspection the children were able to discuss their religion and illustrate how as Catholics they try to lead their lives for the benefit of the whole community.

## **THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

The provision for collective worship is outstanding. A programme of weekly masses as well as Masses to celebrate special occasions is carefully planned in collaboration with the parish priest. Every Tuesday the parish priest celebrates Mass in school which is attended by both parishioners and children on a four week rota for Key Stage 1, Lower Key Stage 2, Upper Key Stage 2 and the whole school. On special occasions the whole school are present. The Mass witnessed during the inspection was exemplary in the way the children took part and the way in which the parish priest involved the whole congregation in the celebration. The Mass was child centred with the parish priest using the vestments and displays of the sacraments mounted in the hall as readily available visual aids. The children participated fully through their joyous and enthusiastic singing and responses, their readings, offertory procession and altar serving. The priest kept the children engrossed throughout, resulting in an inspiring, happy, holy and reverent faith experience. The headteacher leads a whole school assembly twice each week, one being a celebration of pupil achievements. Teachers take it in turn to lead another weekly assembly aided by children in their classes. The Sacramental Programme is prepared and taught in school with the support of the parish priest who also arranges for each child to meet with his or her individual prayer sponsor in the sponsor's home, again establishing school parish links. A focus for prayer is present in each classroom with a prayer box for individual prayers at the school entrance.

## **ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are outstanding. The children make consistently good progress in Religious Education as evidenced by the scrutiny of children's work and the lessons observed during the inspection. Teaching methods used in the school are appropriate to the age and ability of the children with a consistent expectation of high standards. By the end of Key Stage 2 learners have a very good factual knowledge of their faith and show a genuine interest in their Religious Education lessons. During a lesson observed in Year 4 the children were able to respond to the teacher's questioning about - 'How Jesus showed he valued others' - by providing an impressive list of examples. In a Year 6 lesson about vocations the children displayed a real understanding of both the role of the priest and the qualities needed by the priest in order to be successful in carrying out his role. The relationships between teacher and pupils and between the pupils themselves are a major reason why the high expectations of the school are met. The pupils listened to each other and actively supported and helped each other during the lessons observed. The high standards and accompanying achievement in Religious Education can be traced through the school following its Mission Statement and the children practising their faith in their school life. Religious Education is a constant in the school and not just confined to the Religious Education lesson. As a means of retaining the high standards the inspector encourages the school to establish, monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the Salford Diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education in the light of the revised diocesan syllabus.

## **THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good with outstanding features. All lessons observed during the inspection were good with some lessons having outstanding features. In a Key Stage 2 lesson the children were required to 'explore the roles of three people in the story of the prodigal Son'. The lesson was well planned and sought to engage the imagination of the children leading towards the production of a play script based on the story of the Prodigal Son. The lesson provided challenge and a cross curricular link with literacy. A similar cross curricular link with literacy was present in a Year 3 lesson during which the children were asked to show in picture form with speech bubbles how - 'they might break the laws of love'. The teaching methods used in all lessons were appropriate to the age and ability of the children with set task differentiation being mainly by outcome. In the Year 1 lesson about 'how life would be lived in a Jewish town 2000 years ago' the teacher stimulated interest by producing the type of dress worn by Jesus as a boy. In Year 6 thought provoking questioning challenged children to think about the role and qualities of a priestly vocation. Children displayed a good attitude to learning, listened attentively to their teachers, showed respect for each other and concentrated well when working. Marking of pupils' work is carried out regularly and praises good work. The school is encouraged in its efforts to continue to raise standards of achievement by applying the school's recently reviewed marking policy in curriculum Religious Education

## **THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM**

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. The significance of curriculum Religious Education in the school is clearly visible through displays and the presence of religious artefacts and a high quality focal point for prayer in every classroom. The school uses the Salford diocesan Religious Education scheme *REvision 2000*. This is supplemented by an annual cycle of religious activities that further stimulate children's knowledge and understanding of their religion and its traditions. In the light of revised diocesan syllabus the school has significantly put Religious Education assessment as a priority in its School Improvement Plan. The school has enhanced its Religious Education curriculum through its multi-faith and culture policy, world faith assemblies and visiting speakers. The school further promotes community cohesion through its curricular and extra curricular links with a neighbouring school which has a high percentage of ethnic minority learners. Regular inclusion of Religious Education on staff meeting and governors' meetings agendas ensures that its profile within the school remains high and that Religious Education curriculum is under constant review and development. Evidence of children's work from Religious Education lessons is on display in classrooms and shared areas. In order to provide quality assurance the inspector encourages the school to establish a programme for monitoring teaching and learning in curriculum Religious Education as a further means of maintaining standards

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are good with some outstanding features. The chair of governors of the school is a regular visitor to the school and communicates well with the school's headteacher and staff with regard to the Catholic life of the school. The school has appointed a governor with special responsibility for Religious Education who as a member of the governors' curriculum committee ensures that Religious Education is on the curriculum committee's agenda at each meeting. The school's enthusiastic Religious Education co-ordinator was appointed to the post at the beginning of the autumn term 2007 and has already produced an action plan identifying how the school plans further improvements in Religious Education. The headteacher informs both parents and governors each term what each class is studying in curriculum Religious Education. The parish priest, governors and leadership of the school actively promote their shared vision of what a Catholic school, at the heart of the Catholic community, should be. The school's hard working and dedicated headteacher is well supported by the leadership team, staff of the school and parents in ensuring that Religious Education impacts on every area of school life so that Religious Education, prayer and worship and living the faith complement each other.