

**SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. MICHAEL'S
ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Ribble Drive Whitefield Bury Manchester M45 8NJ**

Inspection date November 2007.

Reporting Inspector Mrs. Mary McGrail

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

Type of School	Catholic Primary
URN	105348
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Mr. G. Higgins
Headteacher	Mr. N. Duffin
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Mrs. M. McKenna
Date of previous inspection	October 2003

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. Michael's is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of St. Michael in Whitefield. The majority of children live in the parish. The school is located in the large Rivers housing estate in the Besses Ward, regarded as a deprived area of Bury. The majority of pupils live in private owner occupied properties. Others live in local authority housing or older Victorian properties. The age of the learners is 3 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 30 and there are currently 229 learners on roll of whom 213 are baptised Catholics. 11% are eligible for free school meals. 12 learners have been identified as having special educational needs and 2 have a statutory statement of special educational need. All 11 teachers (100%) are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Michael's is an outstanding school. It is highly effective in offering its learners a traditional Catholic education in a happy, supportive and caring environment where every one is valued and diversity celebrated. The school is firmly at the heart of the parish it serves. Parents are very supportive of the school. Governors, parish priest, headteacher and staff all work co-operatively to provide a quality education for the learners. Both they and their families are fully supported on their faith journey through the well organised parish led Sacramental Programme. The strong home, school and parish links are flourishing. Throughout the year learners and parents are given many opportunities to develop their relationship with God through prayer and worship celebrations. Learners enjoy coming to school and work hard to achieve the high expectations of teachers. Their behaviour at all times is very good. The school is very successful in promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its learners. It is very successful in living the aims of its Mission Statement.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 23 inspection in October 2003 the school has continued its development. No issues for improvement were identified but the school has consolidated and improved its overall provision. The staff have now worked together as a team for several years and this has been beneficial for the learners and the school. Foundation Stage facilities have been refurbished, a prayer garden has been established and extra work areas have been created.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is honest, thorough and realistic. Effective systems for teachers' self evaluation are in place. Monitoring of the school's work by governors and the senior management team have proved to be effective and should continue to be so in the future. Therefore the capacity to improve is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

Once again there are no issues to address. The school should continue to provide a quality education for its learners.

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 Mission Statement has been reviewed by the staff and governing body and approved by parents. The child friendly version is a clear and concise statement and is on display throughout the school. The Mission Statement permeates all aspects of the life of the school and is at the forefront of all its policies. The effective governing body has been successful in appointing Catholic teachers to the school and has a policy of ensuring that the learners are in school for the celebration of Holy Week. The designated governor for Religious Education visits Religious Education lessons and class collective worship sessions. A pro-forma is completed and the headteacher reports the findings to the governing body. The committed and hardworking Religious Education co-ordinator is also a governor of the school and reports regularly to the governors on the quality of provision. The co-ordinator, deputy and headteacher together have a successful system for monitoring and evaluating Religious Education and collective worship. Governors are involved with the successful Sacramental Programme which is fully supported by the school. The parish priest is a welcome daily visitor to the school and all visitors are invited to evaluate their visit to the school. The school has developed links with neighbouring schools, and is working to strengthen these links within the wider community. All full time teachers have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is outstanding. Throughout the year learners, parents, staff and parishioners are given a range of opportunities to develop their relationship with God. Each term begins and ends with a whole school Mass celebrated in church. Masses are held for Holy Days and special feasts. Learners take a full and active role in these celebrations. Prayer has a high profile at St. Michael's. Learners know the traditional prayers of the church and are happy to share their spontaneous prayers with others, as observed in the Year 3 class collective worship during the inspection. The school council and Religious Education co-ordinator were instrumental in the establishment of a "prayer garden" in the school grounds. This is a peaceful haven for private, reflective and communal prayer during the special times of the liturgical year. Well organised whole school and key stage assemblies are held each week led by the headteacher and staff on a rota system. The Sunday readings form the themes for these assemblies. Class led assemblies are held each month. Themes for Key Stage 1 assemblies include other faiths. The one led by Year 4 during the inspection reflected the Religious Education curriculum and was very well presented by the learners, praising and thanking God through words and music. At all these occasions learners are reverent and respectful. Teachers plan their collective worship in great detail and incorporate these plans into the Religious Education files -an example of very good practice. The re-introduction of class Masses would further enhance the provision. The newly appointed parish priest attends most assemblies and is keen to extend and develop his involvement in collective worship.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education are outstanding. Learners enter the Foundation stage with attainment broadly in line with national expectations. A small minority of learners are below. Within and between all 3 key stages learners make very good, consistent progress. They use very good religious vocabulary when discussing their faith. Their written work shows both quality and quantity of presentation. The learners have a very good factual knowledge of their faith. The older learners are able to quote bible references to explain their responses. At the end of Key Stage 1 learners record their work using well constructed sentences. They write their own prayers and retell events in their own words. The older learners have an impressive knowledge and their research skills demonstrate a familiarity with the scriptures and gospels. The learners appreciate the responsibility they have to help the less fortunate, raising generous amounts of money through their own efforts for CAFOD and local charities. Christmas cakes are made for distribution to the elderly in the community. The learners accept responsibility and are proud of their input into school through the school council. Their behaviour at all times is very good.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspector agrees with the school that the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. The lessons observed during the inspection were outstanding. All lessons are very carefully planned with a clear focus and are based on the diocesan *REvision 2000* scheme. Learning objectives are clearly explained to the learners and a wide range of teaching styles, appropriate to lesson content and the age of the learners, is used. Teachers are enthusiastic about their Religious Education teaching and this affects the children who are very keen to learn and give of their best to meet the high expectations of the teachers. There is a good mix of direct teacher input, discussions and activities which meet the needs of all learners who are also well supported by the teaching assistants. Resources are carefully selected and used effectively to enhance the learning process. Learners work is very carefully marked throughout the school. Good work and effort are praised and constructive comments made to encourage improvement. The school has a very effective system for assessing, levelling and moderating learners' work to ensure all the criteria of the diocesan model are covered. Learners have very good attitudes to their learning. They listen attentively to their teachers, are very keen to answer questions and show a genuine enjoyment in producing good quality work. They keep on task until their work is completed and co-operate well in paired and small group work.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. The school has a clear policy for Religious Education which is regularly reviewed. It incorporates the collective worship policy as teachers plan these elements together. All lessons are planned using the *REvision 2000* guidelines. This is supplemented with a wide range of resources and activities in the individual files, formulated for each class, by the Religious Education co-ordinator. The diocesan World Faiths programme is taught in Key Stage 2. The school also has a special time each year when visitors from other faiths are invited into school to speak about their beliefs. Other speakers attend assemblies in order to extend the learners' vision of their community. No learner is withdrawn from either curriculum Religious Education lessons or collective worship. The time allocated to curriculum Religious Education meets both national and diocesan requirements. The length of individual lessons ensures learners have sufficient time to produce the quality and quantity of work appropriate for their age and ability. The parish priest has a valued input into curriculum Religious Education lessons. Year 6 children have a day of reflection which is held at the Marist centre. The Zion community works with the children in school. The parish based Sacramental Programme together with the school's provision for collective worship all contribute to the overall quality of the Religious Education curriculum. This contributes significantly to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness of the learners.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school has evaluated the leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education as outstanding and inspection findings confirm this judgement. The school has an excellent and dedicated Religious Education co-ordinator who has the vision and enthusiasm to support and guide her colleagues. She leads by example and her planning is meticulous. She is fully supported and encouraged by the headteacher who, together with the deputy head, assists her in the monitoring of curriculum Religious Education and collective worship. Their evaluation is fed back to the governing body in detailed reports. The designated governor for Religious Education also monitors the provision. The Religious Education co-ordinator attends meetings involved with the Sacramental Programme and, with many other staff, attends school celebrations. She has audited, supplemented and catalogued the resources for Religious Education. Her continuing professional development involves regular attendance at diocesan courses and keeping colleagues informed of initiatives through staff meetings. She has been instrumental in leading other local Religious Education co-ordinators in developing the effective assessment system currently in use at St. Michael's. All classes have a focal area for prayer and displays throughout the school clearly reflect its faith life.