

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Dunstan's is a one-form entry voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school with its own nursery serving the parish of St. Dunstan, Moston in the north east of Manchester. The school serves an urban area with high levels of social disadvantage. Learners are aged from 3 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 30. There are no mixed age classes. Until 2005 all pupils were Catholics. At present there are 212 pupils on roll of whom 200 are Catholics. The pupils are mainly white British but there has been a rising number of travellers, economic migrants and asylum seekers since January 2005. 22% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. 37 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs although there are no children with a statutory statement of special educational need. There are 11 teachers in the school all of whom are Catholics. There have been several staff changes during the last three years including the headteacher, deputy and a senior manager.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Dunstan's is a good Catholic school in which the leadership and management are working hard to raise standards. The school has a warm caring environment in which all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils are well behaved, polite and friendly. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some outstanding teaching observed during the inspection. The curriculum planning for Religious Education has recently been reviewed and adapted to meet the school's needs and remains at an implementation stage. Monitoring, evaluation and assessment of the curriculum need to be further developed to raise standards particularly where the teaching was found to be satisfactory. The Catholic ethos of the school is strong with excellent provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development further strengthened by the good links between home, school and parish. The headteacher leads the school well and has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 23 inspection in October 2000 the school has addressed and continues to address the issues identified. The standard of leadership and management has been raised, as evidenced by developments taking place in both Religious Education and prayer and worship. The Religious Education policy and the prayer and worship policy have been reviewed and are in draft form awaiting ratification by the governing body at its summer term meeting in 2006. The school's Religious Education curriculum planning has also been reviewed and new planning formats were implemented in the spring term 2006. The monitoring of curriculum Religious Education is in place but requires further development.

Capacity to improve

The capacity to improve is good. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and clearly based on factual evidence produced by the monitoring carried out by the headteacher and deputy headteacher who is also the Religious Education co-ordinator. Priorities for improvement in curriculum Religious Education have been identified and both the headteacher and Religious Education co-ordinator have a shared and clear vision of the school's future needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish the revised and prayer and worship and Religious Education policies and monitor their effective use by all staff.
- Raise standards in curriculum Religious Education by the more effective use of monitoring and evaluation.
- Fully implement the diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education.
- Establish the use of the revised planning sheets for curriculum Religious Education to include opportunities for prayer and worship.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of St Dunstan's are good. The headteacher and deputy have a clear vision of the nature of the Catholic school and the governors are active in their support of the school. The school has a nominated Religious Education governor and each class has a nominated class governor who supports school/parish celebrations and acts of worship. The staff, governors, parents and children were encouraged to contribute to the school's Mission Statement which has been revised since the last inspection. The governors both support and challenge the leadership of the school and are keen that standards should continue to be raised. The parish priest who is the chair of governors and the assistant priest who is also a governor visit the school weekly on separate days to get to know the children. The school and the parish have a shared responsibility in ensuring that the Sacramental Programme is given a high profile within the parish community and is well supported from home. The quality of the relationships between governors and staff and staff and learners is exemplary. Relationships are further strengthened by the care and guidance which the school gives to the children. The children are cherished and their successes celebrated. The principles of the excellence and enjoyment curriculum reinforce the school's agenda that 'every child matters'. Learners are encouraged to exercise their responsibility acting as house captains, school councillors, members of the anti-bullying committee and prefects responsible for shared areas. All Year 6 children are encouraged to take on an additional role of responsibility.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is good. Every week there is a Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 assembly and a whole school assembly (Golden Book Assembly), led by the head or deputy, to which parents are invited. Approximately every month there is a class led assembly to which parents are invited. The head and deputy also lead a 'standards assembly' each half term to establish St Dunstan's expectations of its learners. School Masses and assembly themes are carefully planned and recorded. A weekly class Mass for Key Stage 2 classes, which is planned by the priest and class together, is celebrated in church or in school during the winter months. The weekly class Mass is also the parish Mass and acts as a means of strengthening the school and parish link. The Year 6 class Mass, attended during the inspection, was a well co-ordinated and thematically planned celebration of the gifts of the Holy Spirit enjoyed by learners and parishioners alike. The parishioners served the children with refreshments after Mass. Key Stage 2 Masses take place at the beginning and end of term with Year 2 joining in during the summer term. Staff and children are invited to say the Rosary before school every Thursday. The revised prayer and worship policy is to be ratified at the governing body meeting in the summer term 2006. The school is encouraged to implement the policy as soon as possible and to monitor its effectiveness.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school has evaluated achievement and standards in Religious Education as satisfactory and inspection judgements would support this evaluation overall. The school has recently revised the Religious Education policy and, as already noted, plans to implement a new prayer and worship policy shortly. Together with the monitoring of curriculum Religious Education and the planned development of an assessment system for Religious Education these initiatives will all help to raise standards. The marking of children's work is inconsistent. Although it is the policy of the school to carry out end of unit assessments only a few classes were found to be completing the assessments. In line with school policy teachers are putting a learning objective at the beginning of a child's piece of work but rarely is the learning objective referred to in the marking as required by the school's policy. The children are making satisfactory progress over all but all teachers need to provide their learners with the challenge and high learning expectations in Religious Education as witnessed in Year 2 and Year 6. The use of the diocesan assessment strategies has been identified by the school as an area for development in order to ensure consistent progress within and between all key stages. The school is encouraged to continue with this work.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspector agrees with the school's own self-evaluation that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Most teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. The recently introduced short term planning format supports their work but not all teachers set high expectations and challenge. In Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 the lessons observed were satisfactory and in one case outstanding. The outstanding lesson on 'the story of Pentecost and its effects on the apostles' had planned pace and progression which made full and effective use of talk partners, hot seating and each learner producing a picture record as the story unfolded. The teaching methods used fully captured the interest of the learners adding to their deeper understanding of the effects of Pentecost on the apostles. In Key Stage 2 the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to very good in upper Key Stage 2. The standard of the children's recorded Religious Education is satisfactory across the school. Learners in most classes show interest in their work and respond well to questioning while listening with respect to the opinions of others. Classrooms and teaching areas celebrate the Catholicity of the school with a focus for prayer and children's Religious Education work is displayed. The need to balance the school's budget has impacted on purchasing curriculum resources.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The Religious Education curriculum is good. The school follows the diocesan scheme and the time allocated to curriculum Religious Education is in line with national and diocesan requirements. A revised planning format for short term planning has been introduced but needs to be developed and established to include opportunities for prayer and worship. Planning development would be aided by saving planning on computer. The curriculum is made accessible to all pupils. Challenge is not always present and extra challenge needs to be given to higher achievers. Monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum are in place but, together with assessment, need to be used more vigorously to raise standards of attainment. The Religious Education policy has recently been reviewed and now needs to be established. Areas for development in Religious Education are identified in the School Improvement Plan. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to make a smooth transition to the secondary school through the Crossroads programme. The parish priest and the assistant priest attend days of reflection for Year 6. The inclusion of the study of world religions in the summer term gives pupils the opportunity to understand and respect other religions and cultures. Extra-curricular provision is good with a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and skills in activities such as drama, sport and a homework club. The Religious Education curriculum makes a good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of learners and is enriched by the range of opportunities for prayer and worship provided by the school, the parish priest and assistant priest, backed up by very strong links with parents and the parish community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are good. The deputy head who is the Religious Education co-ordinator is very aware of her role and shares a clear vision with the head for improving the teaching and learning of Religious Education. During the inspection the chair of governors showed himself to be very aware of the position of the school and its developmental needs reflecting the close working relationship between the school's senior management team and governors. The school's Religious Education link governor discusses Religious Education developments with the Religious Education co-ordinator every term. Religious Education is at the top of the agenda for curriculum committee meetings. The headteacher and Religious Education co-ordinator are working hard at implementing the strategies to raise standards as identified earlier in this inspection report. The new diocesan assessment guidelines need to be fully implemented and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning need to be made more effective in order to raise standards. Appropriate priority is given to Religious Education in the School Improvement Plan and associated budgetary decisions. All eleven teachers are Catholics. Eight teachers have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or equivalent. Accommodation is mostly good with additional classrooms, as a result of a falling pupil roll since the school was built, offering a spare classroom for withdrawal groups, a 'calm room', a spacious computer suite and a room for parents.