

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school situated in the Cheetham district of north Manchester serving the small parish of St. Malachy. Pupils are drawn from one of the most disadvantage areas of the city. It is a small school with 198 pupils on roll including a Nursery class. There are currently 97 pupils in the school who live outside the parish. Attainment of many pupils on entry to the Nursery is often below average in social and communication skills. The age range of pupils is from 3 to 11 years. The school's admission number is 30. 150 of the 198 pupils on roll are baptised Catholics. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is 55%. The school has identified 35 pupils as having special educational needs but no pupils have a statutory statement of special educational need. There are 11 full time and 1 part time teaching staff all of whom are of the Catholic faith.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Malachy's is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. The school's Mission Statement is displayed in the main areas of the building. The school's inclusive ethos is a firm foundation for the happy environment in which every member of its community is valued and nurtured. Good relationships between staff and pupils are strengths of the school family as the worth and self esteem of all are encouraged. The spiritual, moral, and social and development of learners is good. The planning, monitoring and the resources supporting the Religious Education curriculum are good. High quality assemblies and classroom worship give good support to the curriculum. Pupils are well motivated and behaviour is good. From Foundation Stage to the end of Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress. The headteacher has assessed the leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school and the quality of collective worship to be good. Inspection evidence gathered, however, indicates the leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school and the quality of collective worship to be outstanding.

Improvement since the last inspection.

Since the last inspection the school has undergone a number of changes in staff personnel including the appointment of a new headteacher and a new co-ordinator for Religious Education. The key issues raised in the last Section 23 Inspection have been addressed in full. Systems for the observation of teaching and learning are in place. Assessment opportunities and activities have been developed but the levelling of pupils' work is not yet linked to diocesan assessment materials. The governors have appointed two newly qualified staff since the last inspection. There is a strong leadership team supporting the headteacher in the leadership and management of the school. This team make 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 comprehensive. The governors and headteacher have a shared vision for the future development of the school. The strong leadership team is committed to the continuing development of all aspects of the Catholicity of the school. There is good evidence, in the effective monitoring of the curriculum and prayer and worship, that all members of the school community are 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

- Further develop the use of the Salford diocese assessment materials in order to create a portfolio of examples of the levels at which pupils are working.
- Continue to support the new Religious Education co-ordinator in the development of her role.

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 are a true reflection of its Mission Statement which is displayed in classrooms and prominent places around the school. The leadership team promote 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 and their attendance at assemblies and religious celebrations. The chair of governors has a weekly meeting with the headteacher. Their shared vision for the ongoing development of the Catholic life of the school is reflected in appointments of committed Catholic teachers and the funding for ongoing staff training. The good relationships that currently exist between the home, school and parish family are a strength. They will be further enhanced by close working with outside agencies through the planned use of the school's surplus accommodation to establish an active pastoral group within the community. Partnership with parents is further encouraged through newsletters, parent evenings and good information and reporting regarding the progress of their children. Parents are invited to share in school Masses, assemblies and liturgical celebrations. The school maintains good links with the diocesan advisers. The school plays a leading role in the preparation of pupils for the Sacraments of Initiation.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The provision for collective worship in the school is outstanding. Opportunities for prayer and worship are carefully planned, organised, celebrated and recorded. The rich and meaningful opportunities for worship that were observed during inspection are a regular and integral part of the pupils' prayer life. In all worship the pupils prayed with reverence and respect which demonstrates the growing importance of prayer in their daily lives. Each classroom has a focus area for prayer and worship and pupils' work is displayed reflecting the topics studied. A whole school assembly led by the headteacher was a continuation of a story which had been introduced at the previous assembly. Both staff and pupils participated in enacting a brief recap of the story before *it* continued. As the story unfolded the theme that respecting and caring for others often involved making good choices was understood by even the youngest pupils. Pupils were attentive and keen to offer their suggestions of how respect and care for others should be reflected in their attitudes in both school and family life. A classroom act of worship in Year 1 and a further whole school assembly led by Year 5 were opportunities for pupils to share readings and compose their own prayers. They prayed with reverence and respect during opportunities for quiet reflection. Their prayer and worship was enhanced by their joyful singing often accompanied by the talented school band.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education are good. The level of attainment when pupils enter the Nursery is often below average in social and communication skills. Progress and achievement in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is good. By the end Key Stage 2 progress is very good. At the end of both key stages standards are in line with those expected in the diocesan programme of work. In all lessons observed learners were able to build on their prior knowledge and attainment. They were always attentive listeners who responded well to questioning and participated in lively discussions. Staff set activities according to pupils' age and ability and used support staff well to help learners achieve at an appropriate level. By the end of Key Stage 1 learners are beginning to write short sentences of independent work. In Key Stage 2 oral work in discussions is good and independent writing continues to develop as pupils record their work in a variety of forms. However in some instances the presentation of work lacks accuracy and a good style of handwriting. In Nursery the children were beginning to understand, through the story of the flood, how much God loved Noah and his family. In Reception pupils demonstrated their understanding of God's wonderful creation through dance. As they move through 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 show increasing concern for the needs of others and give generously to a number of local and world- wide charities.

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. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and use a range of techniques and resources to encourage and support learning and meet the needs of all learners. Effective support staff have a positive impact on the behaviour of the pupils. Good use of white boards and information communication technology create interest and enjoyment in the classroom. Good classroom management skills using praise and encouragement are strong features of teaching and pupils respond with enthusiasm and achieve well. Lesson plans identify clear learning objectives and teaching strategies but as yet many do not include any evaluation of teaching or pupils' achievement. The school should address this by considering a common format for planning. Half termly assessment tasks from *REvision 2000* are completed. However the diocesan assessment materials are not yet fully in use. The school is encouraged to develop further the work of assessment in order to determine the level at which a pupil is working. All teaching areas are bright stimulating learning environments with colourful displays of pupils' work. A very good example of teaching occurred in Year 6. Using the letter of St. Paul, comparing the Church to parts of a human body working together, learners discussed qualities such as patience and hard work that were needed to achieve success in any job undertaken. They identified the difficulties experienced by the disciples in their ministry and the many ministries in the Church today. With "talk partners" pupils discussed how they were actually involved in helping to strengthen parish life. They displayed positive attitudes regarding their responsibilities to support both the school and the parish.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The curriculum for Religious Education is good. Time allocated to religious lessons is broadly in line with national and diocesan requirements. The new co-ordinator for Religious Education has already identified areas for future development but as yet not had the opportunity to attend regular diocesan in-service meetings. 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 teachers and pupils within the classroom. Good resources including information communication technology give valuable support to the delivery of the curriculum. School Masses together with assemblies and liturgical celebrations have a positive impact in supporting, enriching and extending the Religious Education curriculum at the school. The school plays a leading role in the preparation of pupils for the Sacramental Programme

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of Religious Education are good. Working closely together the headteacher, the chair of governors and the parish priest, who is the link governor, share a vision for the on-going development of curriculum Religious Education as a priority affecting the life and work of the school. The headteacher's reports to governors ensure that they are well informed of Religious Education matters. The leadership team works hard to ensure that progress and the development of the curriculum are frequently reviewed. The Religious Education co-ordinator was appointed recently and the school should continue to support her in the development of her role. Aiming to support the staff and further raise standards, the monitoring of teaching and learning through observations is in place. Scrutiny of planning and learners' workbooks is also part of this monitoring procedure. Assessment procedures are in place and with further development will help to give a clearer indication of pupils' knowledge and understanding. In-service training encourages all staff to challenge their own practice and be adventurous and creative in their delivery of the curriculum. Governors are encouraged to 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.