

**SALFORD DIOCESE  
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. CATHERINE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**School Lane Didsbury Manchester M20 6HS**

Inspection date February 2009

Reporting Inspector Mr. J. Brierley

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

Type of School Catholic Primary  
 URN 105524  
 Age range of pupils 3-11  
 Number on roll 434  
 Appropriate authority The governing body  
 Chair of Governors Rev. Fr. B. Wilson  
 Headteacher Mr. P. Hennessey  
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Mrs. A. Ganley  
 Date of previous inspection October 2005

<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	2	
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	
<i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i>		

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

St. Catherine's is a larger than average Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school serving the parish of St. Catherine of Siena situated in Didsbury, an urban area of south Manchester. Pupils come from a full range of social and economic backgrounds including some areas of deprivation. Pupils are mostly of white British heritage but with an increasing number of pupils with English as a second language. On starting school indicators suggest that the majority of the children's attainment is in line with the local education authority's expectation for the age group. The age range of pupils is from 3 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 60 and there are currently 434 pupils on roll of whom 93% are baptised Catholics. 6% of pupils are eligible for free school meals and 82 have been identified as having special educational needs with 2 children having a statutory statement of special educational need. All 19 teachers are Catholics and 11 hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or equivalent. The school holds the Healthy School and Sports Gold Standard awards.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

St. Catherine's is an outstanding Catholic school providing children with an excellent Catholic education that consistently strives to ensure pupils achieve high standards in both their academic achievements, personal development and well-being. The sustained standards are as a result of the leadership provided by the headteacher and the school's leadership team working in harmony with able and informed governors. Together they work to produce high quality leadership at all levels within the school community. Members of staff are excellent role models dedicated to fulfilling their clearly defined responsibilities and establishing exemplary relationships throughout the school community. Staff and governors form a highly efficient team with a shared vision for their school. The School Development Plan seeks constant improvement. It identifies areas for improvement, sets realistic and achievable targets and has put strategies in place to meet those targets and bring about planned improvements within an achievable time scale. The close monitoring and analysis of pupil progress means that the school can recognise and meet the individual needs of pupils with purposeful teaching and learning strategies. The teaching observed during the inspection was consistently good with outstanding features. The school successfully caters for all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development offering a warm, welcoming and caring environment for its happy, well-behaved, confident and polite children. The school enhances its curriculum through a range of extra curricular activities.

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

Following the last Section 48 inspection in October 2005 the school has developed the role of the Religious Education co-ordinator in the monitoring of teaching and pupil learning in Religious Education. The Religious Education co-ordinator observes assemblies, Religious Education lessons and scrutinises lesson planning, pupil Religious Education exercise books and pupil assessments. This is undertaken in conjunction with the headteacher and deputy as a means of raising standards.

### **Capacity to improve**

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the school leadership team supported by staff have put strategies in place to bring about further improvements. The governors both challenge and support the leadership of the school ensuring that the school's capacity to improve is good.

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

- Continue to develop the assessment systems already in place in order to track more easily pupil progress in Religious Education while incorporating the Moving the Vision On material produced by the Salford Diocese.

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

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The dedicated headteacher and the leadership team, which includes the Religious education co-ordinator, provide strong leadership in promoting the Catholic life of the school. They ensure that from the earliest stages children feel valued as members of the school family and later the wider community through the teachings of Catholic values ‘as evidenced by the beatitudes’. The leadership team and staff of the school are supported, encouraged and challenged in their work by effective governors who monitor the curriculum and evaluate and promote the Catholic life of the school. Governors are well informed, employ faith committed staff and hold the school rigorously to account. The parish priest, who is also the chair of governors and the designated governor for Religious Education, is a regular and welcome visitor to the school. He is greatly supported in enhancing the Catholic life of the school and linking school and parish by the Pastor Emeritus who is also a school governor. The parish priest facilitates the full involvement of parents, children and staff in Masses, the Sacramental Programme and parish events. The Mission Statement, included in all policies, encourages pupils ‘to develop as whole persons through hard work and service to others in response to Gospel values’. Community cohesion starts with the school celebrating the diversity of its own pupils and spreads to the wider community through its work with other schools, agencies representing different branches of the community and charities.

## **THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

The provision for collective worship is outstanding. The school’s prayer and worship policy lists twelve aims which ‘promote and develop an appreciation of, and an active participation in, worship and ensure that prayer, worship and liturgical celebration, which are central to our catholic tradition, form an integral part of the school day’. The planning and provision for prayer, collective worship and liturgies is thorough, thoughtful and systematically integral to the daily life of the school for both pupils and staff as claimed in the school prospectus. A rota of class Masses and whole school Masses on special occasions, to which parents are invited, is agreed with the parish priest at the beginning of each school year. The headteacher leads separate key stage merit assemblies each week and alternates with class led assemblies on one other occasion each week following themes associated with the liturgical year. Each class leads a key stage assembly on a rota basis. It is unfortunate that the size of the school hall prevents parents attending class assemblies because the quality of assembly observed during the inspection was extremely high. The Key Stage 2 assembly, led by a Year 6 class on the theme ‘We are all special’, was outstanding in planning, content and delivery. Its theme was the promotion of how to live by gospel values while promoting community cohesion through tolerance and understanding of other faiths and cultures. The children watching were completely engrossed as was the inspector. Each Friday during October and May a Rosary celebration is held before school and attended by pupils, parents, staff and governors who are invited to all school events. Year 3 and Year 6 pupils attend an annual retreat.

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

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good with outstanding features. The school has high expectations of its learners who start school with attainment broadly in line with local education authority expectations. The children make good progress in Religious Education as evidenced by the scrutiny of children’s work and lessons observed during the inspection. Teachers use long term, medium term and short term planning. They use strategies for differentiating pupil work to match ability but the scrutiny of exercise books indicated that differentiation was mainly by outcome and in some instances tasks lacked consistent challenge for the more able learners. Teachers mark pupils’ work mainly by the use of praise with regular identification of how pupils have achieved the lesson objective. By the end of Key Stage 2 the standards in curriculum Religious Education are generally high and pupils are able to talk about their religion and respond positively to probing questions. The school has established the completion of pupil assessment in Religious Education each half term as an aid towards raising standards. The assessments are levelled and recorded so that individual pupil progress can be monitored. The school is planning to develop further the assessment systems already in place in order to track more easily pupil progress in Religious Education while incorporating the Moving the Vision On material produced by the Salford Diocese. The inspector encourages the school to complete this work as a means of raising standards further.

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

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education are outstanding. All lessons observed during the inspection were at least good with some outstanding teaching. Lessons are well planned and organised with clear learning objectives linked to the diocesan guidelines often identified in teacher planning. The headteacher, deputy and Religious Education co-ordinator monitor teaching and learning in curriculum Religious Education through lesson observations and the scrutiny of children's books and teachers' lesson planning. During all the Religious Education lessons observed the children were very well-behaved, demonstrated good subject knowledge and responded readily and enthusiastically to the subject and their teachers. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves are most conducive to the children's personal development and academic progress. All lessons observed displayed each teacher's excellent curriculum knowledge. The lessons were delivered through stimulating and purposeful teaching that brought Religious Education to life and met the needs of the different ages and abilities. A Reception class celebrated a role play baptism followed by a class party, complete with cake and balloons, so that children knew that 'baptism is a family celebration'. Children in a Year 2 class responded to the story of the feeding of the five thousand by dressing in biblical costume, seeing loaves and fishes and filling in speech bubbles with realistic remarks as might have been made by those present at the original event. A Year 6 lesson on vocations displayed rigorous teaching engrossing children in well planned and stimulating activities.

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

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. The Religious Education curriculum meets all national and diocesan requirements and is devised to meet the individual needs of the children of St. Catherine's school. The Religious Education curriculum is fully based on the Salford diocesan *REvision 2000* programme and its updated elements *Moving the Vision On* guidelines. It is supplemented by an array of teaching resources. Interactive whiteboards were used to enhance the teaching and learning in all lessons observed during the inspection. The Religious Education curriculum is broad and includes aspects of community cohesion, circle time and personal, social and health education. Parents are informed through curriculum letters about the aspects of Religious Education their children are to study each term. The school reviews the quality, extent and relevance of the Religious Education curriculum through the school development planning cycle. Governors monitor the curriculum through their committee structure. The significance of curriculum Religious Education in the school is highly visible through the displayed Mission Statement, Religious Education displays celebrating children's work, the presence of religious artefacts and a focus for prayer in the hall and each classroom. The Religious Education curriculum promotes community cohesion by meeting the diverse needs of the school's own children and providing opportunities across the curriculum to promote shared values with people from other faiths and cultures using the diocesan guidelines 'World Religions and People of other Faiths'.

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

Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are outstanding. The headteacher, deputy, and Religious Education co-ordinator supported by the leadership team provide united leadership for the subject. The parish priest is strong in his support of developments in curriculum Religious Education and regularly discusses the Catholic life of the school, curriculum Religious Education and prayer and worship with the headteacher. The governing body provides support, encouragement and challenge. The experienced Religious Education co-ordinator has developed her role since the last inspection becoming fully involved in monitoring all aspects of the teaching and learning of curriculum Religious Education and its development. She keeps governors informed of developments in the subject through her annual written report to the governors. The headteacher includes Religious Education in his termly report to governors. The school is not complacent as the School Development Plan contains seven realistic and achievable objectives as a means of raising standards even further in curriculum Religious Education by the summer of 2009. Curriculum Religious Education is given a primary status on the school timetable and maintained as a key purpose of school life. The parish priest, governors, school leadership and staff actively promote their shared vision of how a very successful Catholic school should meet the needs of its learners and the community it serves by adhering to the values set out in its Mission Statement.