

**SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. MARY AND ST. JOSEPH
ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Blackburn**

Inspection date February 2006

Reporting Inspector Mrs. K. A. Morris

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

Type of School Catholic Primary
 Age range of pupils 4-11
 Number on roll 207
 Appropriate authority The governing body
 Chair of Governors Fr. F. Parkinson
 Headteacher Mrs. E. Grimshaw
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Miss J. Moss
 Date of previous inspection January 2000

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Inadequate
Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school	2	
The quality of Collective Worship	2	
Achievement and standards in Religious Education	2	
The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education	2	
The quality of the Religious Education curriculum	2	
Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education	3	
<i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i>		

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Mary and St. Joseph is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of The Holy Family in the Audley district of Blackburn which is an area of significant social deprivation. The school admits pupils from 4 to 11 years of age with an admission number of 30. The current number on roll is 207 of whom 38% (78 pupils) are baptised Roman Catholics, 45% are Muslim and 17% are of other faiths. No pupils have been withdrawn from collective worship or curriculum Religious Education. All children live in the vicinity of the school in local authority, rented and terraced accommodation. Many come from disadvantaged backgrounds entering school with skills well below those expected for their age especially in language. 37% have a first language not believed to be English and 44% are eligible for free school meals. The school has identified 56 children as having special educational needs including 7 with a statutory statement of special educational need. 9 of the 10 teachers (90%) are Roman Catholics and 4 have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or equivalent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Mary and St. Joseph is a good Catholic school. Leadership and management ensure a welcoming, caring and stimulating environment in which all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. The Religious Education curriculum is planned and supported by good quality assemblies. Teaching is good overall with one excellent lesson observed during the inspection. All staff are strong positive role models for pupils and are dedicated, committed and hardworking. The very good support they receive from learning mentors and non-teaching assistants enable vulnerable children make good progress. All children are happy and feel safe at St. Mary and St. Joseph – a school which sees itself as “an oasis in a spiritual desert”. The school plays a pivotal role in this very diverse community by providing much-needed support for learners and their parents. There are breakfast and after school clubs for the pupils and facilities for adults during the school day include tuition in basic skills such as English, Mathematics and Information Communication Technology. There are also family sessions covering a variety of subjects and a crèche to cater for children below school age. SureStart also provides sessions for single parents and a “mum and toddler” group weekly. Adults of all races and creeds are happy with the provision which the school makes for them.

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has effectively addressed the key issues arising from the last Section 23 inspection in 2000. Teachers plan for pupils by preparing work and resources which they know will stretch the more able child, meet the abilities of average attainers and satisfy the needs of those learners with special needs. The Religious Education co-ordinator is new to the post and is working hard to update documentation and procedures. She monitors learners' work through scrutiny of books. The headteacher monitors teachers' planning and pupils' learning through classroom observation. One classroom has been changed into a well appointed Information Communication Technology room and another is used five days per week for adult learning with input from a number of different providers. There are good quality displays of a religious nature and statues and other artefacts are displayed in the foyer and other areas in the building.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is thorough and realistic. The leadership and management of the school have a clear and focussed vision for the future development of the school. The headteacher's commitment and adaptability to radical change since her appointment in 2000 has moved the school forward significantly and she demonstrates a clear vision for the school's future needs and development. She is strongly supported by the parish priest, who is the chair of governors, the active and knowledgeable governing body and the hardworking staff. The school's capacity to improve is judged to be good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Review the school's Mission Statement seeking the views of staff, governors, parents and learners.
- Review the policy for prayer and worship
- Establish and define the role of the new Religious Education co-ordinator.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good. This is due to the strong leadership of the headteacher and the support of the staff. Governors are supportive and are involved in shaping the life and direction of the school. There have been considerable changes in pupil intake, staff and members of the governing body since the previous Mission Statement was written in 1999 and it therefore requires review to take account of the changes. A shared vision for the ongoing development of the school as a Catholic community, taking into account its diverse population, is reflected in governor appointments of Catholic teachers to the staff. Governors are informed of all matters relating to Religious Education through the headteacher's termly written report and by visits to the school. The parish priest is well known to the pupils and is knowledgeable in the matter of curriculum Religious Education and the school's life of prayer and worship. He is a friend and regular visitor to the school where he celebrates Mass and shares other liturgical celebrations. He meets with the headteacher and visits classes weekly. The headteacher is dedicated to the school and is strongly supported by all staff who themselves are hardworking and committed to the school's Catholicity.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is good. The school has an effective policy for prayer and worship which was written with input from the Diocesan teacher adviser. However the school should now review this with the present staff taking into account the changed circumstances. The school is committed to providing a rich variety of spiritual opportunities and experiences, which are relevant to the children and take into account their different personal, social and religious development in respect of race and culture. The headteacher plans and leads all collective assemblies with pupils taking a very active role in the form of readings, music, singing, visual aids and in the presentation of their written and pictorial work. The celebratory assembly, observed during inspection, concluded with a multi-cultural theme of Asian pupils providing the most enjoyable dance wearing their national dress. Pupils confidently demonstrated their knowledge of the Catholic teachings in a question and answer session following assembly. Parents are invited to the assemblies and many attend bringing younger children with them. Class prayers are said in the morning, at lunchtime and at the end of the day. Learners are provided with opportunities for private and individual prayer as well as group and traditional prayer. Rosary recitation occurs daily throughout Lent and October. No parents have requested withdrawal of their children from prayer and worship in school. At all times children respond well with reverence and respect and enjoy music and hymn singing. Mass in the school hall is said on feast days and other special occasions. The very few non-Catholic children whose parents do not wish them to attend Mass in the church are given a late pass. Collective worship is an integral part of school life and contributes to learners' spiritual, moral and cultural development. Many resources are in place to support this and there is a prayer focal point, of varying quality, in each classroom.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good. On entry to school assessment records from various nurseries show evidence that the majority of children are achieving below average. Several do not converse in English nor do they understand the spoken word. By the end of Foundation Key Stage learners have made very good progress. They know that they are members of God's family and that He loves them. Key Stage 1 learners know prayers relative to their age and are familiar with the stories of the life of Jesus. There are clear indicators of very good progress for learners at the end of Key Stage 2. Strategies and systems have been introduced to ensure that this aspect of the school's life has been prioritised in order that good standards are achieved and maintained. Pupils make at least good progress and often better. Across the whole community there is a feeling of self-worth and self-esteem. Children are aware of the needs of others and this is evidenced by their financial generosity to a number of worldwide and local charities but mainly by their peaceful co-existence within both school and community.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning is good. It focuses on the distinctiveness of this good Catholic school which is committed to the multi-faith, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic nature of its intake. Teachers work very hard using a variety of teaching strategies and have high expectations for themselves and their learners. They demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of Religious Education and *REvision 2000* and they guide and support the teaching assistants very well. Planning is good with objectives which set challenging tasks to deepen learners' knowledge and understanding and to motivate them. Management and organisation in all classes are very good. Behaviour is excellent with pupils being co-operative, attentive and involved. They clearly enjoy the varied and interesting teaching styles, tasks and experiences offered during inspection. St. Mary and St. Joseph is a harmonious school where children work well together, share ideas and respect the views of their peers. This was evident in the lessons observed when shared bibles were used to find given texts. The excellent lesson with the youngest children was practical with the children suggesting written text for their big book on Baptism. Good uses of resources and the use of technology enhance the children's learning.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The Religious Education curriculum is good. There is an effective written policy for the subject. All lesson content reflects the diocesan guidelines with time allocated meeting national and diocesan requirements. Observation shows that all pupils are receiving spiritual guidance and take part in the Religious Education lessons and prayer and worship. Children of all faiths are welcome in the school and enjoy the Religious Education curriculum. To the credit of the school the baptised Catholic learners are receiving their entitlement whilst children of other faiths are happily learning and receiving an insight to the Catholic religion alongside them in complete harmony. Teachers' planning is good and, together with pupils' learning, is monitored by the headteacher. The school has adopted the diocesan programme on other world faiths and prides itself on providing opportunities for pupils to deepen their knowledge of the Catholic faith as well as learning about other Christian and world faith traditions. The curriculum is further enhanced by extra-curricular opportunities including the year 5 and Year 6 residential visit to the Lake District. The Sacramental programme is parish led with the school playing an important supportive role.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are satisfactory. The Religious Education co-ordinator is well supported by the headteacher and the parish priest who is also the designated governor for Religious Education. The co-ordinator is committed to the importance of Religious Education as being central to the life and ethos of the school. She provides support to all staff and ensures an adequate provision of quality resources. However she is relatively new to this responsibility and the school agrees that her role should be more clearly defined and that further professional development involving diocesan advisers and links with other Catholic schools should be provided to assist her in fulfilling this role. The co-ordinator for Religious Education has compiled records relating to the progress of the learners and has constructed a well-organised portfolio of children's work which is used for assessing levels of attainment. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor in the school and well known to all pupils. He visits every class and joins in Religious Education lessons and prayer and worship. The headteacher's reports to governors ensure that they are kept well informed of religious matters. Governors support the religious life of the school by their attendance at assemblies, liturgies and other celebrations of a religious nature.