

**SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. FRANCIS ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Gorton, Manchester**

Inspection date July 2006
 Reporting Inspector Mrs. Mary McGrail
 Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Catholic Primary
 Age range of pupils 3-11
 Number on roll 172
 Appropriate authority The governing body
 Chair of Governors Rev. H. Allan (O.Praem.)
 Headteacher Mrs. L. Frize
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Ms. G. O'Neill
 Date of previous inspection June 2004

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

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St .Francis is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of St. Francis in Gorton, Manchester. The school is situated in a very deprived community which has the highest number of anti-social behaviour orders in the country. It is in an inner city area of Manchester which is well below average in all socio-economic aspects. The majority of learners live in the parish in a range of private and rented housing. They come from mixed backgrounds including refugees and travelling families and some are looked after children. Learners' mobility is high and 30% have English as an additional language. The age range of the learners is 3-11 years. The indicative admission number is 30 and there are 172 on roll including 24 full time places in the nursery. 103 learners are baptised Catholics. 48% of the learners are eligible for free school meals. 47 have been identified as having special educational needs and 3 have a statutory statement of special educational need with 3 currently awaiting a statement. 6 of the teachers (60% of the staff) are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Francis is a good Catholic school. The school offers its learners a good traditional Catholic education in a secure, supportive, happy and attractive environment. The school is firmly at the heart of the parish it serves. The whole school community works together as a team to support fully the learners and their families on their faith journey. The dedicated staff is very well led by the inspirational headteacher who is fully supported by the parish priest and governing body and who provides outstanding leadership for the school. The provision for collective worship ensures that the Eucharist is central to the life of the school. Learners enjoy coming to school and are well behaved, friendly and polite. The school successfully promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its learners. The school is flourishing as a result of the tremendous efforts made over the last two years by governors and staff.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 23 inspection in June 2004, when many key issues were identified, considerable progress has been achieved. The governing body has overseen major changes and all teaching staff but one are new to the school since the last inspection. There is now a clear and shared vision for the further development of the school. All involved in its leadership have the knowledge, dedication and determination to realise this vision. Planning is thorough and assessment is beginning to impact positively on standards. Effective systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the overall provision for Religious Education and collective worship. The governing body is pro-active in its role as "critical friend" to the school. Parents acknowledge the positive changes and the impact which the current leadership and management are having on the development of the school.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is honest and very comprehensive. Factual evidence is collected, analysed and evaluated. Appropriate management systems are in place and there is a genuine commitment from the current staff and governors to take the school forward. Standards and the quality of the Religious Education provision can only improve. The capacity for further improvement is therefore good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue with the work of raising standards of achievement in Religious Education for all learners and particularly for the more able.
- Ensure that the quality of written work reflects the actual ability of the learners particularly in upper Key Stage 2.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The Mission Statement, recently reviewed by staff, governors, parents, parishioners and learners, clearly states the aims of the school. It permeates all aspects of the school's life and appears at the beginning of all policies. It is prominently displayed in all classrooms and throughout the school. Staff and governors share in-service development days. The chair of governors, who is also the designated governor for Religious Education, gives excellent direction to the governing body. His weekly meetings with the dedicated headteacher, his visits to classes and weekly celebrations of Mass for the learners ensure that he is fully informed of all aspects of the provision. Governors' monitoring visits to their designated classes are now a feature of their pro-active role in the school. A log of these visits illustrates the governors' involvement in the day to day life of the school. This is an exemplar of outstanding practice. The detailed reports from the headteacher, together with the report of the Religious Education team leader ensure that the governors' Strategic Committee is able to monitor progress on the School Improvement Plan. The school fully supports the well organised Sacramental Programme, co-ordinated by the vice chair of governors, which is valued as a successful aspect of parish life. Attendance at training sessions has been a feature of the schools efforts to address the considerable issues identified in the last inspection. 6 of the 10 teachers are Catholics. 2 hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or equivalent. Non Catholic teachers are well supported by the headteacher, priest and Religious Education subject leader.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is outstanding. Whole school Masses are celebrated in school for special feasts. Key stage Masses are celebrated each week in church. In all celebrations learners take a full and active role in the planning, readings and music. The Eucharist is central to the life of the school. Whole school assemblies and "Praise" assemblies led by the headteacher are held weekly. Class led assemblies are held weekly on a rota system. One such assembly led by Year 4 during the inspection was a very good example of involving the whole class in praising God with music, drama and prayers. Other learners were also involved, listening attentively, joining in the singing and praying respectfully. It was obvious that the parents who attended enjoyed the experience. Assembly themes reflect both the liturgical year and the Religious Education curriculum as well as raising moral and social issues. Throughout the year learners are given opportunities to develop their relationship with God through, personal, collective and reflective prayer. They are familiar with the traditional prayers of the church and are happy to express their own spirituality in spontaneous prayer. Year 6 learners attend the Marist Centre for a reflective retreat. At all times learners pray respectfully and reverently. Class collective worship based on the diocesan recommendations is developing and the school has established a prayer garden. Effective focal areas for prayer are evident in all classes and attractive displays throughout the school clearly reflect its faith life. The school is not complacent and hopes to introduce the celebration of Mass in individual classes in the future.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education overall are satisfactory with some evidence of good attainment in Key Stages 1 and 2. Learners enter the Foundation Stage with language and communication skills well below average. They make good progress and several are able to write simple words before they enter Key Stage 1 where the good progress is maintained. The younger learners are able to talk about God's gifts to us and know they should thank God. Several are able to write impressive prayers to illustrate their thanks. The older learners have a satisfactory knowledge of St Paul with some being able to discuss their religious knowledge using good religious vocabulary. Some of the older learners, however, found the concept of St .Paul's vision of the Church a difficult concept to understand. The ability to re-tell stories from Jesus' life is a feature of the attainment of the more able learners. In Key Stage 2 the younger learners know how we can help others but are unsure why we should do this. Overall By the end of Key Stage 2 learners have a satisfactory knowledge of their faith with several showing evidence of good achievement. The school is encouraged in its work of raising standards of achievement for all learners and particularly the more able. All learners are enthusiastic, enjoy their lessons and are able to use appropriate religious vocabulary in their discussions. They have a good understanding of their responsibilities through their involvement in the school council and respond generously to a range of charities including support for a young girl in Africa. The good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development supports the learners' work in Religious Education.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspector agrees with the school that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with evidence of good teaching and learning in all key stages. The high quality of the assessment and monitoring procedures introduced in the last year has had a significant effect on the provision. Teachers plan their lessons carefully using the *REvision 2000* guidelines. A range of teaching styles, including the use of technology, is used to meet the requirements of lesson content and the age of the learners. Good questioning skills are a feature in the best lessons but explanations of the tasks are not always made clear to learners causing unnecessary confusion. Tasks are set to meet the needs of most learners although more challenging tasks are not always evident for the more able. Resources are used effectively to enhance the learning process. Good support is given to those learners with additional needs. Overall learners have a satisfactory attitude to their learning and in Key Stage 1 it is good. Learners generally listen attentively to the teachers' input and respond well to questions. The majority show a genuine interest in their work. When given a task to complete they settle down quickly and work collaboratively on group activities. The younger learners are very keen to join in class discussions. All work is very well marked and assessed by the teachers. Clear constructive advice is given on how work could be improved. Good work and special effort is acknowledged and praised. Discussions with learners indicate their actual knowledge is not always reflected in their written work particularly in upper Key Stage 2. The school is encouraged to address this issue.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is good with several outstanding features. All lessons reflect the *REvision 2000* guidelines. A supplementary scheme is used to support and enhance these guidelines. The curriculum time allocated to Religious Education meets both diocesan and national requirements. The timing of individual lessons is appropriate to the age of the learners and an impressive quantity of work is recorded in some classes. Detailed records of assessments are now kept. These are evaluated and progress monitored regularly by the senior management team and Religious Education team leader. Visiting speakers and trips to the Jewish museum extend the experiences learners have to understand their Religious Education curriculum. An "Africa Week" held recently was very successful in celebrating the cultural diversity of the school through art and music. The input of the parish priest on his many visits to the school is appreciated and acknowledged by teachers, learners and parents as is the support received through the parish Sacramental Programme. The quality of the school's collective worship impacts positively on the Religious Education provision. The spiritual, moral social and cultural development of the learners is successfully promoted through the Religious Education curriculum. No learners are withdrawn from Religious Education lessons. A good and effective policy for Religious Education was approved by the governors in 2004 following the last inspection.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of the leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education is good with several outstanding features. The team leader for Religious Education took over the responsibility in summer 2005 on the retirement of the previous post holder. With the excellent support from the senior management team and the parish priest this has resulted in a system being developed which has the potential to become an exemplar of outstanding practice. Teachers' planning is scrutinised each half term by the team leader? and interviews with learners and scrutiny of their workbooks are undertaken. Lessons are observed by the headteacher and team leader with comprehensive records being kept for all these monitoring activities. Levelling of learners' work is ongoing. Results are evaluated and priorities established for further developments. Governors regularly receive a positional statement on the provision for Religious Education and the team leader also meets regularly with the governors' curriculum committee. Governors complete monitoring forms on their class visits. The Religious Education team leader accesses advice from the diocesan advisers, attends diocesan training for her own professional development and updates staff through regular staff meetings. Resources are of a good quality, up to date and adequate in number. Books on religious topics are available for learners' use in the library. A mother and toddler group and a local authority computer workshop for parents are held each week in school, strengthening and extending community links.