



## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Cuthbert's is an averaged sized Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school with a 30 place nursery in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of St Cuthbert in a deprived area of south Manchester. There has been an increase in the proportion of pupils from ethnic minority families to almost one in five of all pupils. Many of these children are learning English as an additional language. The age range of pupils is from 3-11. The indicative admission number is 45 and there are presently 241 pupils on roll including nursery. 220 children (92%) are baptised Catholics. 37% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school has been designated as Manchester's Local Authority Catholic 'Barrier Free' school for pupils with physical disabilities. Consequently, the number of children with special educational needs is higher than that of similar schools. 69 pupils (29%) have been identified as having special educational needs including 14 children who have a statutory statement of special educational need. 11 out of 12 teachers (92%) are Catholics.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Cuthbert's is an outstanding Roman Catholic primary school with a record of high pupil achievement. It is a very welcoming, caring and happy school committed to ensuring quality education for all pupils. Pupils with physical disabilities are fully integrated with all classes and benefit from the excellent care and support provided by the school. The school has 12 teaching assistants providing support to teachers and children. Members of staff are dedicated, enthusiastic and work hard to ensure that the school continues to maintain and improve on its already high standards. Pupils are well behaved, polite and helpful. They enjoy their education in a very happy and secure atmosphere engendered by the exemplary relationships that exist between all members of the school community. The Catholic ethos of the school is very strong with excellent provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development. The school has established a very effective programme for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in Religious Education as an aid to continuous development. Teachers plan their curriculum Religious Education teaching by using a medium term plan for each half-term and a short term weekly plan based on the Salford Diocese *REvision 2000* scheme. The teaching observed during the inspection was consistently good or outstanding. The opportunities for collective prayer and worship observed in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 were of a high standard. The links between the school and the parish are strengthened by the committed work of the parish priest, school governors and the school's parish links co-ordinator. The governors actively support, encourage and challenge the school's leadership. The parish priest celebrates a class Mass in school every Wednesday to which parents and parishioners are invited. On special occasions Mass for the whole school, parents and parishioners is celebrated in church. The school greatly benefits from the dedicated leadership of the headteacher supported by an effective senior leadership team. The governors, who are committed to helping the school monitor its effectiveness, regularly attend training sessions, hold full governing body meetings every term and governors' committee meetings every half-term.

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

Following the last Section 23 inspection in February 2003 the school has further developed the use of classroom observations in order to raise standards in Religious Education by implementing, monitoring and evaluating a programme of regular classroom observations and scrutiny of work. The school has also developed and extended its teaching and learning of diverse cultures through in-service training, improved resources, guest speakers, a multi-faith day and the implementation of a multi-faith and culture policy approved by the governors in July 2004.

### **Capacity to improve**

The school's capacity to improve is excellent because the school's leadership and management, staff and governors have built into the fabric of the school a culture that consistently seeks to improve and achieve very high standards in all that it does.

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

- Establish, monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the Salford Diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education implemented by the school in September 2006.
- Establish, monitor and evaluate a structured programme for engaging the children in the study of world religions.

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

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The school's Mission Statement is central to all that is done in the school. The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors share the same commitment to the consistent and effective promotion of the Catholic life of the school. Together they have prepared, implemented and monitored the School Improvement Plan in which the development of an aspect of Religious Education is the first priority. The chair of governors and headteacher meet each week to discuss matters relating to the life of the school. The Religious Education co-ordinator meets with the Religious Education governor every half-term and with the governors' curriculum committee, as part of the school's planned curriculum monitoring programme. The governors have put strategies in place that support, encourage and challenge all staff to lead, develop and promote both Religious Education and the Catholicity of the school. The governors regularly visit the school and participate in class assemblies, Masses and other celebrations. The improvement of an identified aspect of the Catholic life of the school regularly forms one of the headteacher's performance management objectives. Strong links between school, home and church have been firmly established. The children are given the opportunity to lead and take responsibility for their school through their elected school council. A discussion with the school council during the inspection helped illustrate the effectiveness of the school's leadership team in leading and managing the Catholic life of the school. The children were able to discuss and explain what they had been taught in Religious Education lessons, describe how well the staff care for them, list a whole range of extra curricular activities, including the school's wheel chair formation dancing team, and the charities supported by the school.

## **THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

The quality of collective worship is outstanding. Class Masses, which parents and parishioners are encouraged to attend, are celebrated in school each week and whole school Masses are celebrated in church on special occasions. Every Monday the headteacher leads an assembly at which pupil successes are celebrated. Every Tuesday there is a Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 teacher led assembly and a teacher led Key Stage 2 assembly is held every Wednesday. On Thursdays there is a reflection based hymn practice which seeks to make the chosen hymns more meaningful to the children. Every Friday there is a class led assembly to which parents are invited. A rota for assemblies is agreed for the year and teachers plan and record their assemblies as an aid to future planning. The Religious Education co-ordinator keeps a record of assemblies and Mass themes as a school resource. The Key Stage 2 assembly observed during the inspection was based on the theme 'We are the Body of the Church and can use our hands and skills to do God's work'. The children showed through drama, song, prayer and the use of their ICT skills how curriculum Religious Education and collective worship complement each other in the school. The assembly was linked to the class's curriculum Religious Education on 'the ministries of the church'. During the assembly, at which parents were present, the children were respectful, reverent and active participants in singing hymns, praying together and private reflection. Similarly, the excellent assembly observed in the Foundation Stage on the theme 'People and items we really love' brought together items that had been prepared as part of curriculum Religious Education and other areas of the curriculum. The staff hold their own spiritual reflections as part of their staff briefings during Lent and Advent.

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

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education are outstanding. The school has established an effective and consistent system for monitoring and evaluating standards through a programme of lesson observations and scrutiny of work. Individual feedback is given to teachers by the headteacher or Religious Education co-ordinator. Time is also allocated at staff meetings to discuss areas for improvement in curriculum Religious Education arising from the monitoring programme which includes half-termly curriculum Religious Education evaluations completed by each teacher. The results of the monitoring programme are reported to governors through the headteacher's reports, the Religious Education co-ordinator's meetings with the Religious Education governor and the governors' curriculum committee. Religious Education lessons observed during inspection provided appropriate challenge to match the age and ability of the children. Lessons were enhanced by the effective use of interactive whiteboards. During a Year 6 lesson in which the children were learning about 'church ministries' the teacher was able to link up the interactive whiteboard to the Saint Vincent de Paul Charity website as a way of encouraging pupil research. A variety of church newsletters from different parishes made available to children provided a further source for researching different ministries. The school is bringing more structure to the assessment of Religious Education by implementing the diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education. The inspector recommends that the school continues to establish, monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the Salford Diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education implemented by the school in September 2006.

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

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. During the inspection a parent commented that, “The staff of the school are devoted to ensuring that every child’s potential is dealt with and the individual needs of every child are met.” Evidence accumulated during the inspection supports this parent’s judgement. The teaching observed during the inspection was never less than good and frequently outstanding. Teachers displayed a sound subject knowledge and understanding of Religious Education. The quality of lessons was often enhanced by teachers demonstrating their own sincere belief in what they were teaching. Lessons are well planned and the use of interactive whiteboards as an effective teaching aid was prominent in both key stages. A Year 4 lesson based on the objective ‘to recognise how Jesus teaches us to love one another through the story of the Good Samaritan’ started with the teacher reading the story accompanied by an interactive whiteboard picture presentation of the story. The children then went on to complete a mind mapping task with ‘Love is’ at the centre of the map. Prayer often featured as part of Religious Education lessons. As part of the plenary session of a Key Stage 2 lesson each group produced its own ‘prayer station’ as a focal point for their reflection on ‘the church ministries’ discussed during the lesson. The lessons observed in Key Stage 2 built on the quality teaching and learning witnessed in the earlier stages. The children displayed an excellent attitude to learning, motivated by hard working committed teachers and teaching assistants, who provide a much needed and valued resource in this barrier free school. The children are well-behaved and listen carefully to their teachers. They co-operate effectively and enthusiastically with each other when using ‘talking’ and ‘writing partners’. They set about their independent tasks promptly and industriously.

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

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. The significance of curriculum Religious Education in the school is clearly visible through displays and the presence of religious artefacts and a high quality focal point for prayer in every classroom. At least 10% of teaching time is allocated to Religious Education in all Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and 2 classes. The school uses the Salford diocesan Religious Education scheme *REvision 2000*. This is supplemented by an annual cycle of religious activities that further stimulate children’s knowledge and understanding of their religion and its traditions. The school has significantly put Religious Education assessment as a priority in its School Improvement Plan while seeking to develop prayer and worship through improved resources and the planned installation of an interactive whiteboard in the hall to aid assemblies. The school has further enhanced its Religious Education curriculum through its multi-faith and culture policy, world faith days and visiting speakers. Regular inclusion of Religious Education on staff meeting and governors’ meetings agendas ensures that its profile within the school remains high and that Religious Education curriculum is under constant review and development. Evidence of children’s work from Religious Education lessons is on display in classrooms and shared areas. The school invites guest speakers from other faiths to bring further interest and enrichment to the school’s curriculum Religious Education. The school has identified establishing, monitoring and evaluating a structured programme for engaging the children in the study of world religions as an area for development and the inspector encourages the school to carry out this planned development.

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

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education is outstanding. The chair of governors is a weekly visitor to the school taking the opportunity to discuss matters relating to Religious Education with the headteacher. The governing body is active in helping, supporting, encouraging and challenging the leadership team in promoting their shared vision of what a Catholic school should be achieving for its pupils. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the leadership team is augmented in curriculum Religious Education by the work of a committed, enthusiastic and dedicated Religious Education co-ordinator. With the full support and backing of the headteacher and school leadership team she is leading and supporting the staff of the school in successfully monitoring and evaluating both collective worship and curriculum Religious Education while establishing the Salford diocesan assessment programme. Teachers are encouraged to evaluate what they are teaching in Religious Education each half term and complete written evaluations for the Religious Education co-ordinator. Religious Education occupies one of the school’s in-service training days every year. The governors take a direct interest in curriculum Religious Education through the work of the Religious Education governor and its curriculum committee to whom the Religious Education co-ordinator reports. The school leadership have implemented strategies that constantly seek to evaluate and improve teaching and learning and take account of all the varied needs of all children in this barrier free school.