





## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

St. Joseph's is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of St. Joseph and to a lesser extent the neighbouring parish of Sacred Heart and St. Edward in Darwen. It is situated in a mixed area of private and council housing in a setting which is partly rural and partly urban. The school is smaller than average and most pupils are of white British heritage. The age range of the pupils is from 4 to 11 years. The indicative number is 22 with a standard admission number of 30. There are currently 178 pupils on roll. 159 are baptised Catholics. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The school has identified 19 pupils as having special educational needs. 6 pupils have an Individual Pupil Resource Agreement and 1 pupil has a statutory statement of special educational need. 5 out of 8.5 of the teaching staff (59%) are Catholics. The subject leader for Religious Education was appointed in September 2009 following a period of instability due to long term illness.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Joseph's is a good school with a strong Catholic ethos. Guidance is given to staff and pupils by good leadership. All staff promote a warm and welcoming environment in which most aspects of pupils' spiritual, oral, social and cultural development are good. The inclusive nature of the school and the provision for pupils with special educational needs are examples of the above. Pupils are polite and friendly and overall have a good attitude to their learning. They are encouraged to support and care for each other and this is particularly evident in the respect and care shown to those pupils with special needs. The Religious Education curriculum is well planned and the quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching assistants support the teachers well. Staff are positive role models for pupils and are dedicated, committed and hard working. They are supported by a strong leadership. Links between home, school and parish are well supported by the parish priest who is also the link governor for Religious Education.

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

The key issues arising from the previous Section 48 inspection in March 2006 have been partially addressed. The Salford diocesan assessment guidelines have been implemented but have not been applied consistently by all staff. Issues relating to more effective monitoring and evaluation are in the school's action plan for further development. The parish priest is now the Religious Education governor. There was a period of instability in the leadership of Religious Education due to long term illness. A new subject leader for Religious Education took over the role in September 2009.

### **Capacity to improve**

The school's capacity for further improvement is good. The priorities for development have been identified by the headteacher and governors and these are linked into the school development plan.

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

- Continue to develop further the school's contribution to community cohesion.
- Ensure consistency in the application of the assessment procedures in Religious Education throughout the school and apply more rigorous tracking of pupil progress.

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

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good. The headteacher has a clear vision of the Catholic nature of the school and leads and manages the school with enthusiasm. She is very well supported by the subject leader for Religious Education. Governors are active in their support for the school. The parish priest is the nominated Religious Education governor and is a frequent visitor to the school. His commitment and support for both the staff and the children and their families underpins the religious life of the school. He meets with the headteacher, celebrates class and whole school Masses, liaises with staff with regard to the Sacramental Programme and supports the school with the induction of new children. The quality of relationships between staff and learners is strengthened by the inclusive nature of the provision for pupils with special educational needs. There is good liaison between outside agencies and the school. Plans are in place to develop further the school's contribution to community cohesion by linking with a school with a large Muslim population. The school is encouraged to continue with this work. Religious Education is given priority in the School Development Plan. The school Mission Statement is reviewed on a regular basis and members of the school community are encouraged to contribute. Five members of staff have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies and two members have recently enrolled on the course.

## **THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

Provision for collective worship is good. Throughout the school year opportunities for liturgical celebrations are provided for pupils. They attend Mass in church and celebrate class Masses in school. There are opportunities for pupils to attend a lunch time prayer meeting led by non-teaching staff. No children are withdrawn from collective worship. During the collective worship observed throughout the inspection the children listened well and prayed with reverence and respect. There was evidence of a clear link between the symbolism and responses used in the Mass and those used in the collective worship observed. The parish priest works hard with the school to adapt to the needs of the children involved in the Sacramental Programme each year. Catechists support the school in the teaching of the Sacramental Programme. Prayer and worship is seen as an opportunity to support the gospel teaching using many of the themes from *Nurturing Human Wholeness*. The message from the whole school collective worship is evident in each class in text and verbal prompts from the staff. Both the displays in class and around the school indicate the pupils' abilities to express their spirituality in prayer. In every classroom there is a focus for prayer. These have been arranged with care and attention, for example, picture prompts are evident in the Foundation Stage. The contribution of collective worship to community cohesion requires further development. For example, the school may join the Muslims in their celebration of Eid.

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

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are satisfactory. Although the recording of assessment has been implemented the application of assessment and the inconsistency in record keeping impairs judgement. There are plans and mechanisms in place for developing further understanding of the recording of standards and for a more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress. The school is encouraged to continue with this work vigorously. Pupils with special needs are well supported by good use of teaching assistants. Pupils demonstrated some good factual knowledge of their faith when discussing issues with the inspector. They were aware of their responsibilities both to the people close to them and to the wider community. All learners show a genuine interest in the Catholic faith, enjoy their Religious Education lessons and are developing an awareness and interest in other faiths and cultures. This will be further enhanced in the future as the school develops its contribution to community cohesion. On the whole the teachers' marking praises good work and special effort. In some cases constructive comments also encourage learners to reflect on their responses to lessons and to improve their work. Good examples of this were seen in the books from Year 6. Religious Education contributes positively to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the learners.

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

Overall the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education throughout the school is satisfactory. The teaching observed during inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. The pupils are well behaved overall and their attitude to learning is good. Generally there is clear attention to detail by the teachers with a good rapport between the teachers and the pupils. Pupils take part in their lessons with enthusiasm. Teachers demonstrate a sound knowledge of the subject. Lessons are generally well planned and evaluated. Lesson observations are carried out by the subject leader. Teachers use a variety of teaching styles to engage their pupils. For example, the children's response to "Identifying the "Word" as a key element of the Liturgy of the Mass" was focused and pupils demonstrated their knowledge well. Teaching assistants work hard and support both the pupils and the staff well. (The joy of a supported pupil whilst learning about the Mass was evident for all to see). The recording of assessment has been implemented. The school has identified this as an area for further development in order to ensure consistent recording to aid more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of standards and pupils' progress. Displays of pupils' work both within the classroom and around the school highlight the importance of the teaching and learning within the Religious Education. Resources are good and utilised well.

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

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is good. Religious Education has a very high profile in the school. School policies are regularly reviewed and support the Religious Education curriculum. In accordance with the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales 10% of the teaching time is allocated to the subject. The diocesan guidelines are followed throughout. The school uses a range of resources and materials. These are supplemented by activities relating to the liturgical year and by a range of learning experiences. Community cohesion is embraced through the use of the diocesan World Faith scheme and extra-curricular visits, for example, to a Jewish museum. No children are withdrawn from the teaching of Religious Education. The teachers' planning is good and plans are in place to monitor this. In-service training and staff meetings ensure that provision for Religious Education is under constant review and development. The headteacher discusses issues relating to Religious Education with both the parish priest and the subject leader on a regular basis. The curriculum committee reviews developments in the school. The headteacher reports each term to the governing body about the developments in Religious Education. Finance for Religious Education is given the same priority as other core subjects in the School Development Plan.

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

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are good. A new subject leader took over the role in September 2009. The governors and headteacher fully support the subject leader in her work. She has an excellent knowledge of her subject. She has a clear understanding of her role and is very effective in providing educational direction for the teaching and development of curriculum Religious Education. She leads through the provision of in-service training and staff meetings. A great deal of work has already been undertaken on the development of collective worship. The parish priest and headteacher have a shared vision for the Religious Education in the school. The headteacher reports each term to the governing body and governors are involved in discussions about the curriculum. Priority is given to Religious Education in the School Development Plan. This is underpinned by the importance placed by the governing body in supporting two members of staff to study for the Catholic Leadership qualification. The headteacher and subject leader work very well together. It is clear that the school's Mission Statement, "we value and care for each other" reflects their commitment to supporting the staff and the learners in their journey in faith.