

5SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT



ST. MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Victoria Road Horwich Bolton BL6 6EP

Inspection date February 2009

Reporting Inspector Mrs. K. A. Morris

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

Type of School Catholic Primary
 URN 105250
 Age range of pupils 4 - 11
 Number on roll 221
 Appropriate authority The governing body
 Chair of Governors Rev. Fr. H. Jones
 Headteacher Mrs. Claire Massingham
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Mrs. Mary Elliott
 Date of previous inspection December 2005

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 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	1	
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. Mary's is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It is situated in the small town of Horwich 5 miles from the centre of Bolton and serves the parish of St. Mary in Horwich. The school draws its pupils from varied socio-economic backgrounds living in areas of mixed privately owned and council property. The age range of pupils is from 4 to 11 and the indicative admission number is 30. There are 221 children on roll of whom 217 are baptised Catholics. 11.3% are known to be eligible for free school meals and 38 children have been identified as having special educational needs with 2 children having a statutory statement of special educational need. All 9 teachers (100%) are Catholics and 7 hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or equivalent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Mary's is an outstanding school with a strong Catholic ethos. Excellent leadership and dedicated staff and governors ensure that every child matters. This results in a warm, caring, vibrant and inclusive environment in which all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. The Religious Education programme is well planned and further enhanced by the provision for prayer and worship, the quality of relationships and the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are well supported by the good deployment of teaching assistants, administrative and janitorial staff. All are good role models for the learners and demonstrate excellent levels of care. Teachers work hard and very successfully to make activities practical and fun and they match what they teach to the needs of different abilities in their classes. Learners are well behaved, friendly and polite. They have good attitudes to their learning and respond well to the quality of teaching they experience. Strong home, school and parish links ensure learners are well supported on their faith journeys.

Improvement since the last inspection

The last Section 48 inspection in December 2005 judged the school to be outstanding. The school has maintained this standard and ensures that the full 10% of curriculum time is allocated to curriculum Religious Education in all key stages. With the exception of the chair and vice-chair new governors have been appointed and are linked to specific areas of the curriculum and to a year group. The teaching staff has been reduced by 1 with teaching assistants increased to a ratio of 1 per class. The number in the leadership team has also been increased. The school has achieved the following awards: Quality Mark, Healthy Schools, Eco schools, Investor in People and the National Sport Active Mark. The school now enjoys numerous new facilities including new Foundation and Year 1 accommodation, improvements for outdoor play, an information technology suite and a library. Before and after school facilities are in place and Rescue have established a pre-school toddler group when the leader offers advice and support on social issues.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is thorough, objective and realistic. The leadership and management have a clear, focused vision for the school. There is a genuine commitment to ensuring that all involved in the school community recognise the important role they play in the future development of this successful Catholic school as it lives out its Mission Statement. The school's capacity to improve is therefore outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no issues to address. The headteacher and governors are fully committed to continue to build upon their success and develop each initiative to ensure the realisation of the Mission Statement that " ..everyone feels fully involved."

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, reviewed by staff and governors, permeates all aspects of the life of the school and is prominently displayed throughout the premises. There is also a children's simplified version which is also prominently displayed. The success of St. Mary's is due chiefly to the exceptional team spirit pervading the school which enjoys strong leadership by the dynamic headteacher, dedicated deputy and wholehearted support of the staff and governors. The school benefits to the full from a knowledgeable and supportive parish priest together with a governing body which discusses and revises Religious Education policies on a regular basis. A shared vision for the ongoing development of the school as a Catholic community is reflected in governor appointments of committed Catholic teachers to the staff all of whom have a religious aspect to their performance management objectives. The parish priest, who is the chair of governors and the designated governor for Religious Education, and the vice chair are very regular visitors demonstrating excellent knowledge and understanding of school life. The headteacher and governors work well together as an effective team. They successfully ensure that all pupils, regardless of race, religion, ability or social standing, have equal opportunities in a cohesive and supportive environment which is accessible to pupils with a wide range of additional needs. The school is firmly at the heart of the parish it serves and enjoys close links with other schools in the area and in particular with the associated Catholic high school.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is outstanding. It is a key feature of the school pervading all aspects of its life and underpinned by the clear Religious Education policy which includes prayer and worship. Learners, parents, staff and parishioners are offered a range of rich and meaningful opportunities to develop their relationship with God whilst fostering an understanding of their needs and the needs of those in the wider community. Mass is celebrated at the beginning and end of each term, on Holy Days and special occasions and also every Tuesday during Lent and Advent. Assemblies and non-eucharistic services reflecting the liturgical calendar are celebrated with the parish priest, governors, parents and parishioners. These include Stations of the Cross during Lent, the Holy Rosary during October and the honouring of Our Lady during May. Classes take responsibility for the organisation of these celebrations which are meticulously recorded by the headteacher and co-ordinator for Religious Education. Pupils, regardless of race and culture and from all age groups and abilities, take part in the liturgy. No child is withdrawn from prayer and worship which is successfully linked to curriculum Religious Education and often expressed through areas such as Literacy and Art. Children display confidence and pray with respect and reverence thus demonstrating a developing awareness of the importance of prayer in their lives. The beautiful Mass during which the Year 5 pupils took responsibility for the readings, prayers and processions evidenced this during the inspection. Displays and focal areas throughout the school indicate that learners are encouraged to express their spirituality through prayer.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education are outstanding. Learners enter Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are broadly typical for their age. Excellent progress is made in Foundation Stage and by the end of Key Stage 1 they demonstrate excellent knowledge of their faith. Learners are able to relate verbally and in their pictorial work the bible stories they have heard and a number of them are able to write short accounts. They have good recall on Jesus, Mary and Joseph. They know that God has made and loves them and that by the sacrament of baptism that they belong to God's family. Key Stage 2 learners have excellent factual knowledge of their faith. They are familiar with the Old and New Testaments and are able to produce outstanding quality written work using appropriate language and, in some cases beyond that which is appropriate, to their age. All learners know the difference between right and wrong and are developing a strong sense of responsibility. The school council, prefects and peer mentors who are allocated to each class have enhanced this. A number of worldwide and local charities are supported. Learners understand that they have a responsibility to protect God's creation including respecting people of other faiths and culture. Across the whole community there is a feeling of self-worth and self-esteem. Very clear strategies and systems are in place to ensure that the religious aspect of school's life and curriculum has been prioritised in order that high standards be achieved and maintained.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspector agrees that the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations for themselves and their learners and work hard using a variety of interactive strategies. They demonstrate good subject knowledge, an understanding of Religious Education and make good use of diocesan recommended guidelines. Detailed planning with clearly stated objectives and outcomes lead to well structured lessons incorporating an excellent range of activities and effective use of resources. Assessment procedures have been developed to evaluate teaching and learning and provide a focus for future planning. Levelling and tracking learners' work are established and a profile of learners' work is readily available. Information technology is widely used to support teaching and learning and teachers capitalise on opportunities to link Religious Education across the curriculum. Management and organisation in all classes are excellent. Behaviour is exemplary when pupils are working co-operatively or independently. During the inspection, following from the story of Bartimaeus, Year 2 pupils had the opportunity to experience how those who are blind cope. Resources from a centre for the blind were used to great effect. Year 3 dramatised the Last Supper with the pupils acting the parts of the apostles and exploring their feelings at this time. Year 6 learners recapped their lesson on Peter's denial of Jesus by viewing the video they had previously made using pupils in role-play. All lessons were outstanding with pupils' learning at its optimum. Children of all ages enjoy their lessons and are eager to learn. No child is withdrawn from Religious Education lessons.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. Religious Education has a high profile in the school both as a key element in school improvement and financial planning. At least 10% of teaching time is allocated to the subject. Teachers' planning is thorough, and together with children's learning, is monitored by the headteacher and Religious Education co-ordinator who undertake lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. As part of the school's contribution to community cohesion world faiths are taught using the diocesan recommended guidelines. Additionally there are themed days and weeks marking cultural festivals and visiting speakers help learners gain insight into other cultures and faiths. A recent addition to this provision is the school's computer link to a school in Thailand. The diocesan guidelines *Moving the Vision On* have been introduced and supplemented by activities relating to the liturgical year. A range of other activities and learning experiences are linked to the SEAL programme. Each Monday learners are introduced to the "Statements to Live By" for the week. An impressive range of extra-curricular learning opportunities further enhances the curriculum. This includes sport, music and choir. The school enjoys excellent links with the local sports arena and the sports college. Pupils have the opportunity for "sleepovers" for Year 3 as "pirates" on school premises. There are visits to the Eureka Science Museum Halifax for Year 4 and the Peace Centre in Warrington for Year 5. Year 6 have 1 week's residential in France to study French culture.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school has assessed the leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education as outstanding and inspection evidence supports this judgement. The co-ordinator for Religious Education has outstanding knowledge of her subject, a clear vision for her role within the school and provides strong leadership and direction. She leads by example and has furthered the outstanding work of the previous co-ordinator. She continues to keep excellent records of teaching and learning and prayer and worship. Records include the use of monitoring, assessing and tracking of pupils' work using the recommended guidelines from the diocese. The subject leader leads the staff through regular meetings and continues her own professional development by attending diocesan courses and through the involvement of the diocesan teacher advisers. She is fully supported by the headteacher, the parish priest and the staff. Governors are kept informed of Religious Education and prayer and worship by written and verbal reports from the headteacher, co-ordinator and the parish priest and also by their very frequent visits to school. Resources for Religious Education and collective worship are excellent. Attractive prayer focal tables in classrooms and beautiful displays around the school premises reflect the faith life of St. Mary's where Religious Education and prayer and worship have a high profile.

