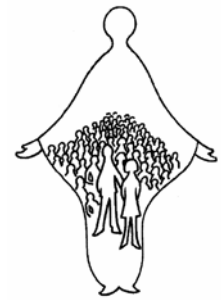


**SALFORD DIOCESE  
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. MARY AND ST. BENEDICT  
ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Brownedge Lane Bamber Bridge Preston PR5 6TA**

Inspection date July 2008

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 119704  
 Age range of pupils 4 - 11  
 Number on roll 223  
 Appropriate authority The governing body  
 Chair of Governors Mr. Richard Vallely  
 Headteacher Mrs. Stephanie Smith  
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Mrs. Andrea Lancaster  
 Date of previous inspection July 2005

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

*The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements*

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

St. Mary and St. Benedict is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of St. Mary in Bamber Bridge, an urban area of mixed socio-economic backgrounds, south of the city of Preston. A large number of pupils live in council and housing association properties and their ages range from 4 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 60 and there are currently 223 children on roll of whom 159 are baptised Catholics. 21% are known to be eligible for free school meals and 28 learners have been identified as having special educational needs. 1 has a statutory statement of special educational need. Of the 8 full time teachers in school 7 (87%) are Catholics - 3 of the 4 non-Catholics are part time. 6 teachers hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or equivalent.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Mary and St. Benedict is a good school with some outstanding features. Leadership and management ensure 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 of prayer and worship. This is supported by the quality of relationships, the quality of teaching and learning and the extended involvement in the parish. Teachers are well supported by the good deployment of teaching assistants, administrative staff and site management. Staff at all levels are dedicated to the school. They are excellent role models for pupils and are committed and hardworking. The learners are happy to come to school and their behaviour is exemplary. They are mannerly and polite and friendly showing good attitudes to their learning and they respond well to the teaching they experience. All pupils, including gifted and talented and those with special educational needs, respond well to the differentiated Religious Education curriculum which meets their needs in this fully inclusive school. Strong home, school and parish links ensure learners and parents are fully supported on their faith journeys.

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

Following the last Section 23 inspection in July 2005 the school has successfully addressed all issues arising. The then recently appointed headteacher has worked extremely hard with the support of the management team, staff, governors and parish priest to establish excellent practice in curriculum Religious Education and prayer and worship. Extensive alterations to the school premises have resulted in a bright innovative teaching and learning environment. This includes a mezzanine library room which also provides accommodation for the nurture group. A "chill-out zone" garden is much appreciated by the pupils. Other rooms have been refurbished to provide accommodation for the intensive support of volunteer parishioners who are welcomed into the school.

### **Capacity to improve**

The school's self-evaluation of its denominational nature is thorough, objective and realistic. In the current absence of the headteacher the two assistant heads provide excellent leadership and are well supported by the parish priest, an active and knowledgeable governing body and the hardworking staff whose team spirit is tangible. There is a genuine commitment to ensuring that all involved recognise the important role they play in the school's future development. Capacity to improve is therefore excellent.

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

- Continue with the pupils' involvement with class and key stage Masses and extend this full involvement to include whole school Masses.

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

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good. The recently reviewed Mission Statement, incorporating a children's version, permeates all aspects of the school's life and is prominently displayed. The exceptional team spirit in the school results from the strong leadership of the headteacher and, in her absence, the two assistant heads. They receive the excellent support from the parish priest, chair of governors, governing body and the whole staff. A performance management objective relating to the Catholic life of the school is a feature of the work of the Religious Education co-ordinator. The parish priest demonstrates a good knowledge and understanding of school life and is a welcome visitor to the school when he meets regularly with the headteacher, the co-ordinator for Religious Education and with staff and learners. Governors are informed of all matters relating to Religious Education in the management's written and verbal reports and by visits to the school. The chair of governors meets regularly with the management team and undertakes a "walk about" the school premises and classrooms. The management, staff and governors work well together as a strong and effective team. They successfully ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to take part in all activities in a cohesive and supportive environment. A teaching assistant is a catechist in the parish led Sacramental Programme which is valued as a successful part of school life. The newly appointed link governor for Religious Education liaises between school and parish.

## **THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

Provision for collective worship is outstanding both in quality and frequency. It is a key feature of the school pervading all aspects of its life and is underpinned by a clear Religious Education policy which includes prayer and worship. Learners, parents and staff are offered a wide range of rich and meaningful opportunities to develop their relationship with God. Whole school Masses are celebrated at the beginning and end of each term, on Holy Days of Obligation and other special Feast Days. Class Masses, together with assemblies and services reflecting the liturgical calendar, are celebrated with the parish priest, parents and parishioners. The pupils write their own bidding prayers and are fully involved in the planning of these celebrations which include bidding prayers, music, singing and drama. This full involvement could be extended to include whole school Masses. Many pupils join the staff and parishioners during the Children's Mass on Sundays. A children's version of the Stations of the Cross and a passion play are celebrated during Lent when the pupils' are given the opportunity for the sacrament of Reconciliation. The quality of collective worship, which is planned at the beginning of the academic year, and the pupils' response are monitored regularly by the management team and the co-ordinator for Religious Education. The parish priest and parish sister are very involved with the excellent range of assemblies drawing on their expertise with which to enthuse the learners. All learners observed during the inspection were given the opportunity for differing forms of prayer and meditation. They prayed with respect and reverence thus demonstrating the developing awareness of the importance of prayer in their lives.

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

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good. Learners enter Reception with skills broadly in line with national expectations. Progress in Foundation and Key Stage 1 is very good. By the end of Key Stage 1 learners are able to relate verbally and in their pictorial and written work stories from the bible. They know that Jesus made them and that by the sacrament of Baptism they are members of God's family. Key Stage 2 learners make good progress. They have good factual knowledge of their faith and the origins of the Catholic Church. They are familiar with the Old and New Testament and very knowledgeable about the Sacraments they have received. During the inspection learners were able to demonstrate differing forms of prayer and an understanding of the love and forgiveness of God. Older pupils can relate the ministries of the church to their own lives. All learners use religious language appropriate to their age. This was evidenced by scrutiny of work and lesson observations during which pupils were provided with opportunities to explore their feelings and to debate, question and express themselves in their written and oral work. They enjoy the subject and take pride in their work. Across the whole community there is a feeling of self-worth and self-esteem- they feel "valued". This has been enhanced by the introduction of the superb School Council and play leaders. Pupils are developing a strong sense of responsibility and are well prepared for the future. The innovative project "The Works" assists them in understanding life after school and their place in the world of work. Pupils are aware of the needs of others and support a number of local and worldwide charities.

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

The inspector agrees that the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good. Teachers have good knowledge of the diocesan *REvision 2000* and *Vision On* guidelines. Detailed planning, which includes opportunities for collective worship, with clearly stated objectives and outcomes, leads to well structured lessons incorporating a good range of activities and resources including information technology and power point presentations. Teachers demonstrate good questioning skills, involve all pupils in class discussions and use plenary sessions to bring lessons to a satisfactory conclusion. Those pupils requiring extra help are well supported by teaching assistants. Appropriate differentiation is identified and provides for the less able child and the high achiever. The school's marking policy is consistently applied. Assessment, based and levelled on diocesan guidelines is well established together with target setting and a portfolio of learners' work. Classroom management and organisation are highly effective. Behaviour is excellent throughout the school with pupils cooperating when working with others or independently. Learners have good attitudes to their work. They listen to their teachers, answer and ask questions and set to work diligently.

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

The school has assessed the Religious Education curriculum as good. Inspection evidence gathered judges this to be outstanding. Religious Education has a high profile in the school. It features both as key element in school improvement plans and in spending planning. At least 10% of teaching time is allocated to the subject. Diocesan guidelines on World Faiths are a feature of the provision. *REvision 2000* and *Vision On* guidelines are followed and supplemented by activities relating to the liturgical year. A range of activities and experiences with appropriate resources are specially planned to meet the needs of all children. The school draws on the expertise of the parish priest and curates together with the parish sister and a number of volunteer parishioners to help create the outstanding provision. The curriculum is further enhanced through impressive extra curricular activities to which every child has access. These include such diverse subjects from Sports to Digital Photography and Create and Craft. Residential visits to PGL in Shropshire for Year 6 and to Rheged in Penrith for Year 5 is a feature of the provision. All areas of the Religious Education curriculum and practices are closely monitored and evaluated. They are under constant review. Appropriate feedback is given and acted upon by individuals and whole staff to ensure good quality teaching and learning.

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

Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education is outstanding. The co-ordinator for Religious Education was appointed in September 2007 since when she has received intensive training and support in curriculum Religious Education and prayer and worship from the diocesan teacher advisers. Dedication, hard work and commitment, together with the support of the headteacher, management team and parish priest, have resulted in outstanding provision for the school's learners. The use of monitoring, evaluation, levelling and tracking learners has been embedded in Religious Education and is used to determine and identify priorities for future development. The co-ordinator who leads by example, has excellent knowledge of the subject, a clear vision for her role within the school and provides good leadership and direction. She leads the staff through regular staff meetings and continues her own professional development by attending diocesan courses and through the involvement of the diocesan teacher advisers. She is well supported by the staff and governors who are kept informed of religious matters by written and verbal reports and by visits to school. Their input is valued and the school views them as "critical friends" Resources are plentiful. Attractive prayer tables and displays throughout the premises reflect the faith life of St. Mary and St Benedict which is a vibrant Catholic learning environment living out its Mission Statement "we are precious people on a learning journey".