

**SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. BRENDAN'S
ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Bolton**

Inspection date January 2007

Reporting Inspector Mr. P. Hennessey

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

Type of School Catholic Primary
 Age range of pupils 4-11
 Number on roll 205
 Appropriate authority The governing body
 Chair of Governors Rev. Fr. J. L. Mallon
 Headteacher Mrs. A. Thornton
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Mrs. A. Thornton
 Date of previous inspection February 2003

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Inadequate
Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school	1	
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	2	
Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education	2	

The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Brendan's is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of St. Brendan in Harwood, north Bolton an area of mainly owner occupied mixed housing. Most learners live in the area and have attended nursery or pre-school education. The majority of pupils are from homes where parents are skilled, semi-skilled or professional. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The age range of pupils is from 4-11. The indicative admission number is 30 and there 205 learners on roll of whom 203 are baptised Catholics. 2% of learners are eligible for free school meals. 19 have been identified as having special educational needs and 3 have a statutory statement of special educational need. All 10 teachers(100%) are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Brendan's is a good school with some outstanding features. It has a strong Catholic ethos. Leadership and management of the school ensure a warm, caring environment in which all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. The Religious Education curriculum is well planned and enhanced by the outstanding provision for prayer and worship, the quality of relationships within the school and the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching is good overall with some outstanding teaching observed during the inspection. Teachers are well supported by the good deployment of teaching and non-teaching assistants, administrative staff and outstanding site management. All staff are positive role models for pupils. Learners are well behaved, polite and friendly. They have good attitudes to learning and respond well to their teachers. Links between home, school and parish are strong.

Improvement since the last inspection

There were no key issues arising from the last Section 23 inspection in February 2003. The school was committed to the development of assessment, recording and reporting in curriculum Religious Education, opportunities for pupils to enhance their lives of prayer and worship and opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of other faiths and cultures. The school has honoured these commitments and continues to do so.

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to improve is good. The school's self-evaluation is thorough and based on objective judgements and factual evidence. The Religious Education co-ordinator has identified what needs to be done to develop curriculum Religious Education further. The inspector agrees with the school's judgement about what needs to be done to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further develop assessment and record keeping procedures in Religious Education using the diocesan guidelines.
- Ensure that Religious Education is afforded the same value as other core subjects in target setting and the marking of learners work.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of St. Brendan's are outstanding. The headteacher and deputy have a clear vision of the nature of the Catholic school and governors support the school. There is a nominated Religious Education governor and a designated committee to monitor the Religious Education curriculum. The school's Mission Statement underpins the life of the school, is reviewed annually and is prominently displayed around the site. A shared vision for the ongoing development of the school as a Catholic community is reflected in governor appointments of committed Catholics to the staff. Religious Education is included as an objective in performance management for the headteacher. Of the 10 staff 4 have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or equivalent and 2 are presently studying for it. The opportunity to study for it is there for the remaining staff. The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school for the weekly Masses, liturgical celebrations and to work with the children in class. The governors are kept informed of all developments through the headteacher's termly reports. All staff and governors are involved in the evaluation of the Religious Education curriculum. Links with the parish are very good and the school is responsible for co-ordinating the Sacramental Programme.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is outstanding. Whole school Masses are celebrated - weekly in school or in church on Holy Days. The learners are fully involved in all aspects of the celebration, preparing readings and prayers and leading the hymn singing. At the school Mass attended during the inspection all the pupils responded reverently and their behaviour was exemplary. Throughout the school year opportunities for liturgical celebrations are provided for pupils, parents and parishioners. Prayer has a high profile in the school and the pupils respond well to the opportunities provided. Their enthusiasm for singing the prayers before and after meals, led by staff or older pupils, is evidence of this. The Key Stage 2 assembly observed during the inspection and the opportunities for prayer and worship at the beginning or end of some observed lessons reflect the prayer and worship policy in action. Assemblies and prayer and worship themes are carefully planned. At all times the children pray reverently and are happy to discuss their prayers with each other and teachers. Meditations are frequently used to start or close lessons. Displays in corridors, classrooms and assembly hall support and encourage the pupils in their prayer. Collective worship is a strength of the school.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good overall. Evidence of good standards was seen in lessons observed and work scrutinised from Foundation Stage to the end of Key Stage 2. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have a good factual knowledge of their faith and are genuinely interested in their Religious Education lessons. Learners are confident and articulate when discussing Religious Education or asking questions to clarify issues, as witnessed in a year 6 Lesson about the work of John Bosco. There was a good use of religious vocabulary in all observed lessons. During an outstanding lesson observed in the Foundation Stage children answered and asked questions confidently, performed tasks enthusiastically and took part in prayer and worship with reverence and confidence. Written work is of a good standard and shows progress in Religious Education. There is a need to provide more of a challenge to the learners in some of the written work they are given. Marking and assessment of Religious Education would benefit from being more rigorous. The use of comments on how pupils could improve their work would help pupil progress. Developing assessment using the diocesan scheme is one of the outcomes of the school's self evaluation. The inspector agrees with this and the school is encouraged to continue with this work. Good use of information communication technology was seen during lessons.

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 demonstrate good subject knowledge of the curriculum as witnessed in lesson observations, their planning and the scrutiny of workbooks. A very good lesson in Year 5 explored aspects of Judaism together with questions and discussion linked to previous learning when a member of the Jewish faith visited the class. Their work was differentiated and learners showed great enthusiasm for the tasks set. The behaviour of learners at all times is very good. An outstanding lesson in the parish church involved Reception aged children in a variety of practical activities and a question and answer session with the parish priest about the church and its ceremonies. Their enthusiasm for the lesson and their recall of previous work was most impressive. The teachers make good use of computer technology and of artefacts to support their lessons, as seen in Year 2 and in Year 5. Visits and visitors are also used to further support teaching and learning in Religious Education. The children take a pride in their work and are genuinely enthusiastic. Regular monitoring and assessment are carried out and the school is determined to develop this further. Classrooms are well organised and displays in classrooms and around the school encourage and support the pupils in their Religious Education work.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The Religious Education curriculum is good and Religious Education has a high profile in the school. The headteacher is the subject co-ordinator. At least 10% of capitation allowance is spent on Religious Education and 10% of teaching time is dedicated to Religious Education. The diocesan *REvision 2000* scheme is followed. It is supported by activities relating to the liturgical year and by other resources and learning experiences such as visits from people of other faiths. Teachers' planning is thorough and carefully monitored, as is pupil learning, using work scrutiny and lesson observations. Regular in-service provision and Religious Education meetings keep the curriculum under review and development. The headteacher's monitoring of work, lessons and planning further inform this review. Appropriate feedback is given and acted upon by individuals and the whole staff to ensure good quality teaching and learning. Assessments in line with the diocesan guidelines still need further development but progress has been made in this area. The Religious Education curriculum is supported by outstanding examples of prayer and worship. The headteacher's reports to the governors each term contain a section on Religious Education ensuring that the curriculum is under regular review.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school has evaluated leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education as good and the inspector agrees with this assessment. The governors support the headteacher in her role as Religious Education co-ordinator and share her vision for Religious Education in the school. In order to raise standards further the school has identified the need to ensure that Religious Education is afforded the same value as other core subjects in target setting and the marking of learners work. The school is encouraged to develop this in order to improve on what is already good provision. There is a named governor with responsibility for Religious Education and the curriculum committee monitor teaching and learning. The Chair of governors is heavily involved in the life of the school, making regular visits to classrooms as well as celebrating weekly Mass and taking part in various liturgical celebrations. He participates in curriculum Religious Education when he is invited to assist in lessons regarding the role of the priest, the Church and its ministries. Resources are good and are supplemented whenever possible. Many artefacts were in evidence during lesson observations. The governing body were actively involved in drawing up the Mission Statement which is evident in all aspects of the provision for curriculum Religious Education.