

**SALFORD DIOCESE  
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL  
Lime Road Haslingden Lancashire BB4 5NP**

Inspection date April 2009

Reporting Inspector Mr. J. Brierley

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

Type of School Catholic Primary  
 URN 119663  
 Age range of pupils 4-11  
 Number on roll 104  
 Appropriate authority The governing body  
 Chair of Governors Mrs. C. Pilling  
 Headteacher Miss D. McNicoll  
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Miss D. McNicoll  
 Date of previous inspection October 2006

<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	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 small voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parish of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Haslingden. Pupils are drawn from an area of Rossendale with considerable social and economic disadvantage. Most children come from White British backgrounds with a small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds having English as an additional language. Indicators suggest that the children's ability on entry to the school is below the national expectation for the age group. The school has experienced high mobility of children joining the school as its popularity has increased. Since September 2007 33 new pupils have started in classes other than reception. The age range of pupils is from 4 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 15 and there are currently 104 pupils on roll of whom 58% are baptised Catholics. 20% of pupils are eligible for free school meals and 17 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs with 1 child having a statutory statement of special educational need. 2 out of the 5 teachers (40%) are Catholics. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools, Activemark, Quality Mark, the Lancashire Race Equality and Lancashire Learning Excellence awards. The school is an approved National Professional Qualification for Headship Leadership Development School.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Mary's is an outstanding Catholic school providing children with an excellent Catholic education that ensures they achieve high standards in both their academic achievements and personal development. The high standards are a result of the inspirational leadership provided by the headteacher working closely with her staff and school governors in order to provide excellent leadership at all levels within the school community. The committed governing body is provided with quality information by which it can challenge the school. The chair and vice chair of governors meet regularly with the headteacher and share a vision and direction for the on-going development of the school. Supported by the new team of teachers, the head ensures that the clear directions in the School Improvement Plan are met. This results in all teaching and support staff having high expectations of themselves and their pupils and a continued and consistent improvement based on rigorous self evaluation. The close monitoring and analysis of pupil progress means that the school can recognise and meet the individual needs of pupils with purposeful teaching and learning strategies. Members of staff provide excellent role models dedicated to fulfilling their clearly defined responsibilities and establishing exemplary relationships. The teaching observed during the inspection was consistently good and often outstanding. Children from diverse homes, cultures and backgrounds are warmly welcomed into a caring environment in which 'every child matters' and all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are met. The school exudes an infectious enthusiasm for quality teaching and learning.

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

Following the last Section 48 inspection in October 2006 the school has raised expectations with regard to the presentation of pupils' written work through the headteacher's rigorous monitoring and evaluation of pupil exercise books and teacher planning. The use of the diocesan assessment materials has been developed as an aid to monitoring pupil progress. Each pupil now has an individual portfolio of assessment tasks completed by the pupil and levelled by the teacher each half term.

### **Capacity to improve**

The accuracy of the school's self evaluation, an established culture for self improvement by all stakeholders and a strong lead in strategic planning and management from the leadership of the school and governing body make the capacity for improvement to be outstanding.

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

- Complete the development of an effective tracking system which will track individual pupil progress in the two Religious Education attainment targets.

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

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The headteacher provides strong leadership in the Catholic life of the school. The governors are well informed, strong, challenging and supportive. They work well in their committees in helping to share the Catholic life and direction of the school. The designated Religious Education governor is the parish priest who promotes the school as a Catholic community by way of it being a key facility within the parish. The central philosophy and clear expectations for the school are set out in the Mission Statement and the school's aims are summarised on the school sign at the entrance to the school grounds as - 'Our School, our family, modelled on Christ'. The prominence given to this simple statement ensures that the Mission Statement is remembered by all members of the school community and provides a key reference point for all decision making, school policies, governance and protocol. Parents are well informed and consulted through a variety of formal and informal meetings, the school website, termly curriculum overviews, questionnaires and weekly newsletters distributed from both school and church. There are strong links with home, school and parish aided by the Sacramental Programme. The school is highly successful in promoting and leading community cohesion through practical and varied initiatives both locally and in the wider community. Children are encouraged to exercise responsibility through their house system, playground leaders and mediators.

## **THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

The provision for collective worship is outstanding. The planning and provision for prayer, collective worship and liturgies is thorough, thoughtful and systematically integral to the daily life of the school for both pupils and staff. There is a school 'Prayer Room' where staff and children can experience tranquillity and take the opportunity to pray and reflect at various times of the day and write spontaneous prayers on the board provided. Teachers aim to provide opportunities which enable children to engage as active participants in collective worship, liturgy and prayer, enabling children to express a living faith and, therefore, develop spiritually and morally. The school's prayer and worship policy states, 'We believe that Christian worship in a Catholic school names and celebrates God's presence in our lives'. The policy is clear in its aims, principles, planning, content, delivery, recording, monitoring and evaluation. Assemblies and services reflecting the liturgical year are planned and celebrated with the parish priest, parents and parishioners. Two whole school assemblies attended by governors and parents take place each week. The whole school assembly observed during inspection based on - "What is Easter all about?" - was imaginative and creative as it taught children the real meaning of Easter. Children prayed reverently, listened attentively and sang with enthusiasm. The Reception/Year 1 prayer and worship based on "Easter - New Life", enhanced by a hatching egg to give the message impact, was ideal for the age group and a joy to behold. The school recognises and celebrates the diversity of faiths and cultural backgrounds provided by its own pupil roll and as part of its study of different faiths.

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

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are outstanding. Indicators suggest that on starting school the majority of the children's attainment is below the national expectation for the age group. Despite the substantial gains the children make in Early Years Foundation Stage attainment on entry to Year 1 is usually below average. In response to the consistently high quality teaching they receive, pupils make good progress and achieve exceptionally well in Key Stages 1 and 2. It is the level of achievement judged against prior attainment that makes achievement in curriculum Religious Education outstanding. The teaching methods used in the school inspire children to achieve high standards, as witnessed during an outstanding Year 5/Year 6 lesson on 'Reconciliation'. The teaching was imaginative, stimulating and rigorous. The teacher played the role of a penitent on a video recording shown on the interactive whiteboard to encourage thinking and discussion at a challenging level. By the end of Key Stage 2 learners have acquired a very good factual knowledge of the Catholic faith and show a genuine interest in their Religious Education lessons. The school's monitoring of pupil progress is rigorous and informative as a result of the assessment for learning strategies used in the school. The school, however, is not complacent. The school's planned introduction of the Assessing Pupil Progress format to monitor Religious Education and the development of an effective tracking system which will track individual pupil progress in the two Religious Education attainment targets is encouraged by the inspector.

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

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is outstanding. This school rightly claims in its Religious Education policy that - "Religious Education is not merely a subject; it is an influence on all areas of our school life as we strive to bear witness to our community". Lessons have clear learning objectives linked to the diocesan assessment targets. All lessons observed during the inspection were at least good with some outstanding teaching. The improvements brought about since the last inspection can be tracked through the headteacher's recorded recommendations arising from her rigorous monitoring of lessons, exercise book scrutinies and teacher planning. All staff members willingly contribute to the self evaluation system as outcomes are shared with staff and governors as a means of continually raising standards. Teacher marking in curriculum Religious Education is of a high standard and meaningful to pupils as it endeavours to bring about a greater understanding of the subject. Many aspects of 'assessment for learning' are well established in Religious Education. Teachers seek the opinion of children on how to make their Religious Education lessons even more absorbing. Children are stimulated by creative and imaginative teachers seeking to arouse and sustain their interest. This was evidenced during a Year 3/Year 4 lesson on Islam enhanced by the input from a Muslim teaching assistant. The well planned Year 1/Year 2 lesson led children to examine the thoughts and feelings aroused by the events of Good Friday and a Reception/Year I lesson on the 'Resurrection' was enhanced by extending the lesson into Early Years Foundation Stage continuous provision activities.

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

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. The Religious Education curriculum meets all national and diocesan requirements and is devised to meet the individual needs of the children of St Mary's school. The Religious Education curriculum is fully based on the Salford diocesan *REvision 2000* programme and its updated elements *Moving the Vision On* guidelines. It is supplemented by other schemes and a rich array of teaching resources. The school reviews the quality, extent and relevance of the Religious Education curriculum through the school improvement planning cycle. This incorporates the monitoring of pupil work outcomes, pupil responses and individual pupil assessment books. It also includes schemes of work, teaching approaches and assessment for learning. The Religious Education curriculum has continued to be adapted to cater for the mixed-aged classes. The significance of curriculum Religious Education in the school is highly visible through the displayed Mission Statement, Religious Education displays celebrating children's work and the presence of religious artefacts. The Religious Education curriculum promotes community cohesion by warmly welcoming and meeting the diverse needs of the school's own children, providing opportunities across the curriculum to promote shared values and help pupils challenge prejudice or discrimination within the community. The school uses the diocesan guidelines 'World Religions and People of other Faiths' and celebrates the diversity of faiths and cultural backgrounds. Religious Education has a high profile and is under constant review and development by staff and governors.

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

Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are outstanding. The parish priest, chair of governors and vice-chair are welcome and regular visitors to the school and discuss the Catholic life of the school and Religious Education with the headteacher who is also the Religious Education subject leader. As a result of her weekly presence the vice chair acts as a link governor for curriculum Religious Education. Termly reviews of the Religious Education action plan are undertaken via joint staff and curriculum committee meetings and feedback to the full governing body is given through the headteacher's termly reports. There is a clear educational direction for the teaching and development of curriculum Religious Education which is seen as a core subject by staff and governors. Policies relating to Religious Education are regularly reviewed. The four point Religious Education action plan is a feature of the School Improvement Plan and a successful and effective monitoring and evaluation of curriculum Religious Education has been established. In a culture of mutual support, teamwork and celebration of individual strengths, morale is visibly high and children thrive amidst excellent relationships. The parish priest, governors, school leadership and staff actively promote their shared vision of how a very successful Catholic school should meet the needs of its learners and wider community. As one of its aims the school's Mission Statement strives, 'To create a strong link between home, parish and school which prepares the child for life in the wider community'. The school can confidently claim 'Our focus is people, our model is Christ'.